

PROPOSED RULEMAKING

FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION

[58 PA. CODE CH. 65]

General Fishing Regulations; Miscellaneous Special Regulations

[56 Pa.B. 3629]

[Saturday, June 20, 2026]

The Fish and Boat Commission (commission) proposes to amend § 65.24 (relating to miscellaneous special regulations). The commission is publishing this proposed rulemaking under the authority of 30 Pa.C.S. (relating to Fish and Boat Code). This amendment would add the Ohio River Basin to its list of waters subject to special regulations.

A. Effective Date

This proposed rulemaking, if approved on final-form rulemaking, will go into effect on January 1, 2027.

B. Contact Person

For further information on this proposed rulemaking, contact Robert J. Schefter, Esq., P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000, (717) 705-7810. This proposed rulemaking is available on the commission's website at pa.gov/agencies/fishandboat.

C. Statutory Authority

The provisions of the amendment to § 65.24 are published under the authority of 30 Pa.C.S. §§ 322, 2102 and 2307 (relating to rules and regulations; and waters limited to specific purposes) and amended under the authority of 30 Pa.C.S. § 2307(a), 65 Pa.C.S. § 710 (relating to rules and regulations for conduct of meetings) and section 506 of The Administrative Code of 1929 (71 P.S. § 186).

D. Purpose and Background

The Three Rivers (Ohio, Allegheny and Monongahela) system in western Pennsylvania supports diverse fishing opportunities for a variety of species in and around the metropolitan area of Pittsburgh. Once severely polluted, the Three Rivers now boast excellent populations of walleye, sauger, smallmouth bass, muskellunge, flathead catfish and channel catfish that provide countless hours of recreational fishing.

In 2022, the commission initiated a blue catfish reintroduction program in the Three Rivers. Blue catfish, which are native to the Three Rivers but did not return following their extirpation in the early 1900s, are currently being stocked in the Ohio River, with plans to expand the program to the Allegheny River and Monongahela River in 2027. The goal of the reintroduction is to establish a self-sustaining, naturally reproducing population of blue catfish in the Three Rivers.

Recent assessments of the flathead catfish populations in the Three Rivers conducted to estimate abundance, age and growth rates, and mortality characterize the populations as low to moderate density that exhibit extreme longevity. Flathead catfish in the Three Rivers system are the oldest ever recorded, with individuals over 30 years of age relatively common. In addition to their longevity, flathead catfish growth in the Three Rivers is extremely slow. On average, it takes a flathead catfish 15 years to reach 24 inches in length, and over 30 years to reach 35 inches, which is considered a trophy fish desired by anglers.

Current regulations in the Three Rivers system for blue catfish and flathead catfish, among other species of catfish, include them as panfish, with a 50 fish per day limit and no minimum size limit. As the goal of blue catfish reintroduction is to establish a naturally reproducing population, maximizing survival of blue catfish stocked in the Three Rivers is paramount, and commission staff recommend implementing catch-and-release regulations on blue catfish in all flowing waters in the Ohio River Basin. Also, to prevent potential exploitation of flathead catfish and conserve trophy-sized fish, commission staff recommend a four-fish daily creel limit for flathead catfish, with only one fish being greater than or equal to 35 inches in length for all flowing waters in the Ohio River Basin.

E. Summary of Proposal

The commission proposes to amend § 65.24 (relating to miscellaneous special regulations) to add the Ohio River Basin to its list of waters subject to special regulations, to read as set forth in Annex A.

F. Paperwork

This proposed rulemaking will not increase paperwork and will not create new paperwork requirements.

G. Fiscal Impact

This proposed rulemaking will have no adverse fiscal impact on the Commonwealth or its political subdivisions.

H. Public Comments

Interested persons are invited to submit written comments, objections or suggestions about this proposed rulemaking to the Executive Director, Fish and Boat Commission, P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000, within 30 days after publication of this notice in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. Comments submitted by facsimile will not be accepted.

Comments also may be submitted electronically to ra-pfbcregulations@pa.gov. Electronic comments submitted in any other manner will not be accepted.

TIMOTHY D. SCHAEFFER,
Executive Director

Fiscal Note: 48A-380. No fiscal impact; recommends adoption.

Annex A

TITLE 58. RECREATION

PART II. FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION

Subpart B. FISHING

CHAPTER 65. SPECIAL FISHING REGULATIONS

§ 65.24. Miscellaneous special regulations.

The following waters are subject to the following miscellaneous special regulations:

<i>County</i>	<i>Name of Water</i>	<i>Special Regulations</i>
	* * *	* *
Monroe and Pike	Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area	The use of eel chutes, eelpots and fyke nets is prohibited. The taking of the following fishbait is prohibited: crayfish or crabs, mussels, clams and the nymphs, larva and pupae of all insects spending any part of their life cycle in the water. The taking, catching, killing and possession of any species of amphibians or reptiles within the boundaries of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area is prohibited.
<u>Multiple Counties</u>	<u>Ohio River Basin, including the following major waters, all tributaries to those waters and all tributaries to those tributaries, named and unnamed: Ohio River, Beaver River, Shenango River, Mahoning River, Connoquenessing Creek, Slippery Rock Creek, Monongahela River, Youghiogheny River, Tenmile Creek, Dunkard Creek, Cheat River, Allegheny River, Kiskiminetas River, Conemaugh River, Crooked Creek, Mahoning Creek, Redbank Creek, Clarion River, French Creek, Cussewago Creek, Oil Creek, Tionesta Creek, Brokenstraw Creek and Conewango Creek.</u> <u>This regulation does not apply to lakes within the Ohio River Basin.</u>	<u>Blue catfish: All tackle types are permitted. Catch and release/no harvest; it is unlawful to take, kill or possess blue catfish at any time.</u> <u>Flathead catfish: All tackle types are permitted. The daily limit and possession limit is 4 flathead catfish. Only 1 of the 4 flathead catfish may be greater than or equal to 35 inches in length. All other species—</u> <u>Commonwealth inland waters regulations apply. See § 61.1.</u>
Northampton	Martins Creek, Section 01, from the confluence of the East and West Branch of Martins Creek downstream to the outflow of the Bangor sewage treatment plant near unnamed tributary	All tackle types are permitted. Brown trout—catch and release/no harvest; it is unlawful to take, kill or possess brown trout at any time. All other trout species—7 inches minimum size limit—5 trout daily limit (combined species) from 8 a.m. on the opening day of the regular season for trout to midnight on Labor Day. Catch and release/no harvest—it is unlawful to take, kill or possess any trout from 12:01 a.m.

the day after Labor Day to midnight the third Sunday in February the following year. Closed to all fishing from 12:01 a.m. the third Monday in February until 8 a.m. on the opening day of the regular season for trout. All species except trout—inland regulations apply. See § 61.1.

* * * * *

[Pa.B. Doc. No. 26-866. Filed for public inspection June 18, 2026, 9:00 a.m.]

No part of the information on this site may be reproduced for profit or sold for profit.

This material has been drawn directly from the official *Pennsylvania Bulletin* full text database. Due to the limitations of HTML or differences in display capabilities of different browsers, this version may differ slightly from the official printed version.

[Top](#)

[Bottom](#)