

MDIFW Fishing Regulation Proposals

For the 2026 fishing season



The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife is proposing regulation changes for the upcoming ice fishing and open water fishing seasons. These regulations are needed to provide for the effective conservation of Maine’s inland fisheries and to enhance fishing opportunities throughout the State. This rule-making packet includes 12 individual proposals presented in the following “themes”:

Theme	Pages	Proposals
Special Need	2-3	2
Salmonid Growth, Condition, and Performance	4-5	1
Expanded Angler Opportunity	6-8	2
Errors, Conflicts, and Confusion	9-13	7

The goal of presenting the proposals in this manner is to better facilitate the public review process and to increase public understanding of the changes currently proposed.

- Note in each proposal: **Gray Highlighted** Text = Eliminated text.

Underlined Text = New text.

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Theme: Special Need

Description: Management initiatives, typically in response to dramatic events, an emerging situation requiring adaptive rule changes, or needs not addressed by other regulatory themes (for example, addressing impacts of summer/winter fish kills, changes in management focus, or more complex and comprehensive initiatives).

Number of Proposals in this Theme: 2

Theme: Special Need

Water: CROOKED BROOK FLOWAGE

Region: F **WATCODE:** 1082

Town(s):

Danforth

Proposal Source: Legislature

County(ies):

Washington

Regulation Change Description:

Remove general fishing regulation prohibiting fishing within 150 feet of a fishway, and retain restriction of fishing from within or on the fishway.

Purpose of Change:

A recently constructed fishway now prohibits anglers from fishing within 150 feet of the fishway under general law. This proposal will allow anglers to fish from the local park located at the fishway. Anglers will be prohibited from fishing in or from the fishway.

Proposed Modifications:

CROOKED BROOK FLOWAGE, Danforth (South Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: Fishing is prohibited in or from the fishway; there are no distance restrictions when fishing near the fishway (Title 12, subsection 12457).

Proposed Final Regulations:

CROOKED BROOK FLOWAGE, Danforth (South Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: Fishing is prohibited in or from the fishway; there are no distance restrictions when fishing near the fishway (Title 12, subsection 12457).

Theme: Special Need

Water: HARRINGTON LAKE

Region: E **WATCODE:** 0700

Town(s):

T3 R11 WELS

Proposal Source: MDIFW

County(ies):

Piscataquis

Regulation Change Description:

Remove general fishing regulation prohibiting fishing within 150 feet of a fishway, and retain restriction of fishing from within or on the fishway.

Purpose of Change:

A recently constructed fishway now prohibits anglers from fishing within 150 feet of the fishway under general law. This proposal will allow anglers to fish in the historically popular pool downstream of the dam. Anglers will be prohibited from fishing in or from the fishway.

Proposed Modifications:

HARRINGTON LAKE, T3 R11 WELS (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: Fishing is prohibited in or from the fishway; there are no distance restrictions when fishing near the fishway.

Proposed Final Regulations:

HARRINGTON LAKE, T3 R11 WELS (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: Fishing is prohibited in or from the fishway; there are no distance restrictions when fishing near the fishway.

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Theme: Salmonid Growth, Condition, and Performance

Description: This theme includes waters where salmonid size quality, condition, and overall population health has declined or is no longer meeting management goals and objectives, typically associated with populations where reduced angler use, reduced forage, and/or reduced harvest have allowed population growth to exceed carrying capacity and resulting in priority species no longer meet size quality management objectives.

Number of Proposals in this Theme: 1

Theme: Salmonid Growth, Condition, and Performance

Water: SCHOODIC LAKE

Region: F **WATCODE:** 0956

Town(s):

Brownville, Lake View Plt, T4 R9 NWP

Proposal Source: MDIFW

County(ies):

Piscataquis

Regulation Change Description:

Remove minimum size and daily bag limits on togue under 23 inches and allow for the harvest of only one over 23 inches. In addition, create a fall fishing season with artificial lures only and catch and release on all fish species expect togue.

Purpose of Change:

Recent biological surveys have documented a decline in the overall health of the popular togue fishery, attributed to an overly robust population and restrictive harvest regulations. Increasing harvest opportunities and expanding seasons will help reduce population density, create new fishing opportunities, and improve the overall health and balance of the fishery. These changes will promote a more sustainable and resilient fishery across all species, while also encouraging angler participation and use of the resource.

Proposed Modifications:

SCHOODIC LAKE, Brownville, Lake View Plt, T4 R9 NWP (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: **B.** S-2, S-3, S-11, S-19, S-22. Minimum length limit on landlocked salmon: 21 inches. Daily bag limit on togue: 6 fish; minimum length limit: 14 inches, only 1 may exceed 23 inches. No minimum size or bag limit on togue less than 23 inches. Daily bag limit on togue greater than 23 inches: 1 fish. From October 1 - December 31: ALO, S-7; Except that togue may be harvested as described above.

Proposed Final Regulations:

SCHOODIC LAKE, Brownville, Lake View Plt, T4 R9 NWP (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: **B.** S-2, S-3, S-11, S-19, S-22. Minimum length limit on landlocked salmon: 21 inches. No minimum size or bag limit on togue less than 23 inches. Daily bag limit on togue greater than 23 inches: 1 fish. From October 1 - December 31: ALO, S-7; Except that togue may be harvested as described above.

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Theme: Expanded Angler Opportunity

Description: Creation of new or expanded seasonal fishing opportunities (including fall fishing, year-round fishing, or winter opportunities) commonly associated with stocked waters and supported by public interest.

Number of Proposals in this Theme: 2

Theme: Expanded Angling Opportunity

Water: CROSS LAKE

Region: G **WATCODE:** 1674

Town(s):

Cross Lake Twp, Square Lake Twp

Proposal Source: MDIFW

County(ies):

Aroostook

Regulation Change Description:

Allow ice fishing for smelts from the time ice forms in the fall until April 30th and allow anglers to harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit while smelt fishing.

Purpose of Change:

Increase early season fishing opportunity and allow anglers to harvest non-regulated fish species that have no size or bag limit if those fish are caught incidentally while fishing for smelt during the early smelt season. The winter ice fishing season is popular on Cross Lake as the lake regularly forms safe ice early. Opening Cross Lake to an early smelt season would provide additional opportunities close to population centers.

Proposed Modifications:

CROSS LAKE, , Cross Lake Twp, Square Lake Twp (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: B. S-2, S-3, S-11, S-19. Only 1 brook trout may exceed 14 inches. Daily bag limit on landlocked salmon: 3 fish; minimum length limit: 12 inches. Open to ice fishing for smelts from the time ice forms in the fall until April 30. While fishing for smelts, anglers may harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit. (See also Fish River Thoroughfares).

Proposed Final Regulations:

CROSS LAKE, Cross Lake Twp, Square Lake Twp (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: B. S-2, S-3, S-11, S-19. Only 1 brook trout may exceed 14 inches. Daily bag limit on landlocked salmon: 3 fish; minimum length limit: 12 inches. Open to ice fishing for smelts from the time ice forms in the fall until April 30. While fishing for smelts, anglers may harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit. (See also Fish River Thoroughfares).

Theme: Expanded Angling Opportunity

Water: LOBSTER LAKE

Region: E **WATCODE:** 2948

Town(s):

East Middlesex Canal Grant Twp, Lobster Twp, Northeast Carry Twp, TX R14 WELS

Proposal Source: MDIFW

County(ies):

Piscataquis

Regulation Change Description:

Expand ice fishing season from February only to the B Season (Open to ice fishing and open water fishing from January 1 - April 30). Liberalize togue regulations from the current 1 fish, 23 inches to 2 fish - no harvest between 23-33 inches and only 1 may exceed 33 inches. Remove open water line restriction from 1 line to allow 2 lines (general law).

Purpose of Change:

In response to declining angler use on Lobster Lake, liberalizing season dates, line restrictions, and togue regulations is proposed. These changes will increase angling opportunities, encourage greater participation, and support continued management of a sustainable, high-quality togue fishery. By expanding access and flexibility for anglers, these regulatory adjustments aim to reverse the downward trend in lake usage while maintaining a healthy togue population.

Proposed Modifications:

LOBSTER LAKE, East Middlesex Canal Grant, Lobster Twp, Northeast Carry Twp, TX R14 WELS (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: **B.** S-2, S-8, S-22, S-25. Minimum length limit on landlocked salmon: 20 inches. Minimum length limit on togue: 23 inches. Open water fishing restricted to 1 line per person. Open to ice fishing during the month of February only: S-8. Daily bag limit on togue: 2 fish, only 1 of which may exceed 33 inches. All togue between 23 and 33 inches must be released alive at once.

Proposed Final Regulations:

LOBSTER LAKE, East Middlesex Canal Grant, Lobster Twp, Northeast Carry Twp, TX R14 WELS (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: **B.** S-2, S-8, S-22. Minimum length limit on landlocked salmon: 20 inches. Daily bag limit on togue: 2 fish, only 1 of which may exceed 33 inches. All togue between 23 and 33 inches must be released alive at once.

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Theme: Errors, Conflicts, and Confusion

Description: A significant effort has been made to correct previously identified issues related to conflicting regulations, inconsistencies, inadvertent omissions, errors, and confusing regulations that have also created challenges for mapping special regulations in the Fishing Laws Online Angling Tool (FLOAT). This theme is retained from year to year to correct any newly identified issues.

Number of Proposals in this Theme: 7

Theme: Errors, Conflicts, and Confusion

Water: EAGLE LAKE

Region: G **WATCODE:** 1634

Town(s):

Eagle Lake, T16 R5&6 WELS, Wallagrass

Proposal Source: MDIFW

County(ies):

Aroostook

Regulation Change Description:

Add "While fishing for smelts, anglers may harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit."

Purpose of Change:

Allow anglers to harvest non-regulated fish species that have no size or bag limit if those fish are caught incidentally while fishing for smelt during the early smelt season.

This change will align harvest opportunities for non-regulated fish species with the existing smelt fishing season, reducing confusion among anglers and supporting consistent, practical enforcement. Since these species are not subject to specific conservation limits, allowing their harvest during smelt fishing activities will not negatively impact fish populations.

Proposed Modifications:

EAGLE LAKE, , Eagle Lake, T16 R5&6 WELS, Wallagrass (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: **B.** S-2, S-3, S-11, S-19. Only 1 brook trout may exceed 14 inches. Daily bag limit on togue: 6 fish; no minimum length limit; only 1 may exceed 23 inches. No bag limit on landlocked salmon less than 14 inches. Daily bag limit on landlocked salmon over 14 inches: 2 fish. While fishing for smelts, anglers may harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit. (See also Fish River Thoroughfares).

Proposed Final Regulations:

EAGLE LAKE, Eagle Lake, T16 R5&6 WELS, Wallagrass (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: **B.** S-2, S-3, S-11, S-19. Only 1 brook trout may exceed 14 inches. Daily bag limit on togue: 6 fish; no minimum length limit; only 1 may exceed 23 inches. No bag limit on landlocked salmon less than 14 inches. Daily bag limit on landlocked salmon over 14 inches: 2 fish. While fishing for smelts, anglers may harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit. (See also Fish River Thoroughfares).

Theme: Errors, Conflicts, and Confusion

Water: KATAHDIN LAKE

Region: F **WATCODE:** 2016

Town(s):

T3 R8 WELS

Proposal Source: MDIFW

County(ies):

Penobscot (North)

Regulation Change Description:

The description of motor boat usage is incorrect and needs to be adjusted to follow Baxter State Park Rules.

Purpose of Change:

Baxter State Park rules prohibit use of motorboats and outboard motors on certain waters of the Park, including Katahdin Lake. This change will create consistency between Baxter State Park and State Fishing Regulations.

Proposed Modifications:

KATAHDIN LAKE, , T3 R8 WELS (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: **CI.** S-19. Only 1 brook trout may exceed 12 inches. Closed to the taking of live baitfish. Motorboats or outboard motors are prohibited. **permitted**

Proposed Final Regulations:

KATAHDIN LAKE, T3 R8 WELS (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: **CI.** S-19. Only 1 brook trout may exceed 12 inches. Closed to the taking of live baitfish. Motorboats or outboard motors are prohibited.

Theme: Errors, Conflicts, and Confusion

Water: LONG LAKE

Region: G **WATCODE:** 1682

Town(s):

Madawaska, Saint Agatha, T17 R3&4 WELS

Proposal Source: MDIFW

County(ies):

Aroostook

Regulation Change Description:

Add "While fishing for smelts, anglers may harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit."

Purpose of Change:

Allow anglers to harvest non-regulated fish species that have no size or bag limit if those fish are caught incidentally while fishing for smelt during the early smelt season.

This change will align harvest opportunities for non-regulated fish species with the existing smelt fishing season, reducing confusion among anglers and supporting consistent, practical enforcement. Since these species are not subject to specific conservation limits, allowing their harvest during smelt fishing activities will not negatively impact fish populations.

Proposed Modifications:

LONG LAKE, Madawaska, Saint Agatha, T17 R3&4 WELS (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: **B.** S-2, S-3, S-11, S-19. Only 1 brook trout may exceed 14 inches. Only 1 landlocked salmon may exceed 16 inches. Open to ice fishing for smelts from the time ice forms in the fall until April 30. (See also Fish River Thoroughfares). While fishing for smelts, anglers may harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit.

- Tributaries downstream of the first road crossing: S-19. Only 1 brook trout may exceed 14 inches. Only 1 landlocked salmon may exceed 16 inches. The general law maximum length limit on landlocked salmon does not apply.

Proposed Final Regulations:

LONG LAKE, Madawaska, Saint Agatha, T17 R3&4 WELS (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: **B.** S-2, S-3, S-11, S-19. Only 1 brook trout may exceed 14 inches. Only 1 landlocked salmon may exceed 16 inches. Open to ice fishing for smelts from the time ice forms in the fall until April 30. (See also Fish River Thoroughfares). While fishing for smelts, anglers may harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit.

- Tributaries downstream of the first road crossing: S-19. Only 1 brook trout may exceed 14 inches. Only 1 landlocked salmon may exceed 16 inches. The general law maximum length limit on landlocked salmon does not apply.

Theme: Errors, Conflicts, and Confusion

Water: MACHIAS LAKE, BIG

Region: G **WATCODE:** 1960

Town(s):

T12 R8 WELS

Proposal Source: MDIFW

County(ies):

Aroostook

Regulation Change Description:

Add "While fishing for smelts, anglers may harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit."

Purpose of Change:

Allow anglers to harvest non-regulated fish species that have no size or bag limit if those fish are caught incidentally while fishing for smelt during the early smelt season.

This change will align harvest opportunities for non-regulated fish species with the existing smelt fishing season, reducing confusion among anglers and supporting consistent, practical enforcement. Since these species are not subject to specific conservation limits, allowing their harvest during smelt fishing activities will not negatively impact fish populations.

Proposed Modifications:

MACHIAS LAKE, BIG, T12 R8 WELS (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: **B.** S-11. Open to ice fishing for smelts from the time the ice forms in the fall until April 30. While fishing for smelts, anglers may harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit.

Proposed Final Regulations:

MACHIAS LAKE, BIG, T12 R8 WELS (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: **B.** S-11. Open to ice fishing for smelts from the time the ice forms in the fall until April 30. While fishing for smelts, anglers may harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit.

Theme: Errors, Conflicts, and Confusion

Water: MACHIAS LAKE, LITTLE

Region: G **WATCODE:** 1578

Town(s):

Nashville Plt

Proposal Source: MDIFW

County(ies):

Aroostook

Regulation Change Description:

Add "While fishing for smelts, anglers may harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit."

Purpose of Change:

Allow anglers to harvest non-regulated fish species that have no size or bag limit if those fish are caught incidentally while fishing for smelt during the early smelt season.

This change will align harvest opportunities for non-regulated fish species with the existing smelt fishing season, reducing confusion among anglers and supporting consistent, practical enforcement. Since these species are not subject to specific conservation limits, allowing their harvest during smelt fishing activities will not negatively impact fish populations.

Proposed Modifications:

MACHIAS LAKE, LITTLE, Nashville Plantation (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: **B. S-11**. Open to ice fishing for smelts from the time ice forms in the fall until April 30. While fishing for smelts, anglers may harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit.

Proposed Final Regulations:

MACHIAS LAKE, LITTLE, Nashville Plantation (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: **B. S-11**. Open to ice fishing for smelts from the time ice forms in the fall until April 30. While fishing for smelts, anglers may harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit.

Theme: Errors, Conflicts, and Confusion

Water: PORTAGE LAKE

Region: G **WATCODE:** 1602

Town(s):

Portage Lake Twp

Proposal Source: MDIFW

County(ies):

Aroostook

Regulation Change Description:

Add "While fishing for smelts, anglers may harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit."

Purpose of Change:

Allow anglers to harvest non-regulated fish species that have no size or bag limit if those fish are caught incidentally while fishing for smelt during the early smelt season.

This change will align harvest opportunities for non-regulated fish species with the existing smelt fishing season, reducing confusion among anglers and supporting consistent, practical enforcement. Since these species are not subject to specific conservation limits, allowing their harvest during smelt fishing activities will not negatively impact fish populations.

Proposed Modifications:

PORTAGE LAKE, , Portage Lake Twp (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: **B. S-2, S-3, S-11, S-19**. Only 1 brook trout may exceed 14 inches. No bag limit on landlocked salmon less than 14 inches. Daily bag limit on landlocked salmon over 14 inches: 2 fish. Open to ice fishing for smelts from the time ice forms in the fall until April 30. While fishing for smelts, anglers may harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit. No person shall operate any boat or canoe propelled by motor on that portion of Portage Lake known as the Floating Island Area, north and westerly of a line beginning at the eastern edge of the marshy peninsula running out from Hutchinson Ridge, running 50 yards outside of the floating islands in a northerly direction to the mouth of Mosquito Brook.

Proposed Final Regulations:

PORTAGE LAKE, Portage Lake Twp (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: **B. S-2, S-3, S-11, S-19**. Only 1 brook trout may exceed 14 inches. No bag limit on landlocked salmon less than 14 inches. Daily bag limit on landlocked salmon over 14 inches: 2 fish. Open to ice fishing for smelts from the time ice forms in the fall until April 30. While fishing for smelts, anglers may harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit. No person shall operate any boat or canoe propelled by motor on that portion of Portage Lake known as the Floating Island Area, north and westerly of a line beginning at the eastern edge of the marshy peninsula running out from Hutchinson Ridge, running 50 yards outside of the floating islands in a northerly direction to the mouth of Mosquito Brook.

Theme: Errors, Conflicts, and Confusion

Water: SAINT FROID LAKE

Region: G **WATCODE:** 1610

Town(s):

T14 R7 WELS, Winterville Plt

Proposal Source: MDIFW

County(ies):

Aroostook

Regulation Change Description:

Add "While fishing for smelts, anglers may harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit."

Purpose of Change:

Allow anglers to harvest non-regulated fish species that have no size or bag limit if those fish are caught incidentally while fishing for smelt during the early smelt season.

This change will align harvest opportunities for non-regulated fish species with the existing smelt fishing season, reducing confusion among anglers and supporting consistent, practical enforcement. Since these species are not subject to specific conservation limits, allowing their harvest during smelt fishing activities will not negatively impact fish populations.

Proposed Modifications:

SAINT FROID LAKE, , T14 R7 WELS, Winterville Plt (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: **B.** S-2, S-3, S-11, S-19. Only 1 brook trout may exceed 14 inches. No bag limit on landlocked salmon less than 14 inches. Daily bag limit on landlocked salmon over 14 inches: 2 fish. While fishing for smelts, anglers may harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit. (See also Fish River Thoroughfares).

Proposed Final Regulations:

SAINT FROID LAKE, T14 R7 WELS, Winterville Plt (North Zone). General fishing laws apply, except: **B.** S-2, S-3, S-11, S-19. Only 1 brook trout may exceed 14 inches. No bag limit on landlocked salmon less than 14 inches. Daily bag limit on landlocked salmon over 14 inches: 2 fish. While fishing for smelts, anglers may harvest any fish species for which there is no bag limit. (See also Fish River Thoroughfares).