

DEC: Spring starts with fishing opportunities

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Basil Seggos announced the upcoming start of the spring trout fishing season, which his team said provides excellent angling opportunities statewide thanks to the state's extensive stocking program and considerable number of wild trout fisheries. DEC's spring trout stocking begins in March and runs through early June, and includes more than 1.8 million trout stocked in waters statewide.



Trout Fishing

For decades, April 1 was the traditional "opening day" of trout fishing season. This year, the date marks the opening of the harvest season for trout, because year-round fishing was made available on most streams with the implementation of an Oct. 16 through March 31 artificial lures-only catch-and-release season.

Trout Stocking

DEC stocking trucks have already begun hitting the roadways, and trout stocking is in full swing with 1,872,105 catchable brown, rainbow and brook trout stocked in ponds and streams across the state this spring. Stocked-extended streams (listed in the trout streams section of the regulations guide) will receive fish every other week for two months to enhance season-long opportunities for angler success. Most streams will also receive a seeding of larger stocked trout. Spring trout stocking lists, includ-

ing the week of stocking for trout streams, can be found at <https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/30465.html>. Additionally, DEC recognizes some fisheries rely on stocked fish to reach a certain size before they can be harvested. Visit <https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/30467.html> to find locations where these put-grow-and-take stockings of brook trout, lake trout and Atlantic salmon take place.

New Fishing Regulations

DEC recently announced the adoption of new freshwater fishing regulations that will take effect on April 1. Following a public comment period on draft proposals earlier this year, the new regulations reflect the input and support of the angling community in DEC's efforts to make fishing New York's waters less complicated. Of

particular interest to trout anglers is a new statewide regulation for rainbow trout, brown trout and splake. The regulation creates consistency with inland trout regulations and expands opportunities for year-round fishing. A complete compilation of changes and an assessment of public comment associated with the rulemaking can be found at <https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/124258.html>.

New Trout Stream Signage

As part of DEC's efforts to make fishing more enjoyable, DEC has posted "Management Category" signs on most of the state's 1,500 miles of public fishing rights. Management categories make a sharp distinction between wild trout management (wild, wild quality, wild premier) and stocked trout management (stocked, stocked ex-

tended). More details can be found here: https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/fish_marine_pdf/tsmpreachcat.pdf. These signs convey not only the management category for a particular stream reach, but also the regulations associated with the reach.

Trout Stream Fishing

Last year, DEC launched an interactive trout stream fishing map to provide anglers with one-stop-shopping for information about stocking, fishing access, season dates, and regulations on DECinfo Locator. Anglers will be able to view trout stream reaches color-coded by management category and fishing access associated with those reaches. These layers will allow trout stream anglers to plan their trips and find their preferred trout stream fishing experiences. Links to the Trout stream fishing map and a user guide are available here: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/122444.html>.

Freshwater fishing Regs

The DEC announced its newly adopted freshwater fishing regulations will take effect April 1.

Following a public comment period on the draft proposals earlier this year, the new regulations reflect the input received and the support of the angling community in DEC's efforts to make fishing New York's waters less complicated and easier to understand.

Notable changes include:

- New statewide regulations are

now in place for rainbow, brown trout, and splake in lakes and ponds. The season will now be open year-round, with a five-fish daily limit, any size, with a "no more than two longer than 12 inches" harvest rule.

- Statewide Atlantic salmon regulations will now allow for a year-round open season.

- Ice fishing is permitted on all waters, unless specifically prohibited, with the exception of Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Herkimer, Lewis, St. Lawrence, Warren, and Washington counties where previous rules remain.

- New specific dates have replaced floating dates for statewide season openers, including May 1 for walleye, northern pike, pickerel and tiger muskellunge; June 1 for muskellunge; and June 15 for largemouth and smallmouth bass.

- The statewide sunfish daily harvest limit has been reduced from 50 to 25 fish.

- The statewide minimum size limit for crappie has been increased from 9 inches to 10 inches.

A complete compilation of changes and an assessment of public comment associated with the final rulemaking is available on DEC's website. The regulations will also be found on DEC's 2022 Freshwater Fishing regulations Guide, expected to be available at licensed issuing agents statewide in early April. Hard copies can also be requested by emailing fwfish@dec.ny.gov.

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