



WALTER RABON  
COMMISSIONER

TED WILL  
DIRECTOR

April 18, 2024

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Members, Board of Natural Resources

FROM: Ted Will

SUBJECT: **Briefing on Proposed Amendment to Fishing Regulations, Subject 391-4-3**

Georgia is home to the largest diversity of black bass species found anywhere in the world. There are currently 12 recognized species, all of which are targeted by anglers. Seven of these species are only found in watersheds in Georgia or bordering states. Responsibly managing these species ensures Georgia's anglers can continue to enjoy them for generations to come.

These proposed amendments to the fishing regulations make two changes. First, length limits related to Shoal Bass are updated to make them easier to understand and maintain healthy populations. Second, daily creel limits are modified for native black bass species with limited range and populations.

These proposals will be given widespread distribution to the public. This briefing requires no Board action at this time. WRD plans to present the proposed amendments to the Board of Natural Resources for consideration and adoption on June 25, 2024.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or need more information about this proposal in advance of our meeting. Thank you.

TW/crp

Attachment



WALTER RABON  
COMMISSIONER

TED WILL  
DIRECTOR

April 18, 2024

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Members, Board of Natural Resources

FROM: Ted Will

SUBJECT: **Proposed Rules – Economic Impact**

The Administrative Procedure Act requires that in the formation and adoption of any rules which will have an economic impact on the businesses in the State, attempts be made to reduce the economic impact of the rule on small businesses. This applies to businesses that are independently owned and operated, are not dominant in the field and employ 100 employees or less. The Wildlife Resources Division has determined that the proposed amendments to Rule 391-4-3-.05 and Rule 391-4-3-.06 are expected to have no negative economic impact on small business.

TW/crp

**Public Participation Plan for  
Proposed Amendments to  
Rule 391-4-3-.05 Pertaining to Creel and Possession limits and  
Rule 391-4-3-.06 Pertaining to Size Limits**

Proposed amendments to Rules 391-4-3-.05 (pertaining to creel and possession limits) and 391-4-3-.06 (pertaining to size limits) are being considered. The proposed amendments are reflective of customer desires related to black bass fishing. Public input is an important component of the decision-making process. The plan for receiving and considering public input includes publicly posting and distributing the proposed rules, holding a virtual public hearing through WRD’s Facebook page, and the acceptance of written, verbal, and electronic comments.

Following the public comment process, the Board of Natural Resources will consider the proposed amendments and any comments received on June 25, 2024, at 9:00 A.M. at 2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, SE, Suite 1252, Atlanta, Georgia.

**Schedule for Public Participation on Proposed Amendments to  
Rules 391-4-3-.05 and 391-4-3-.06**

Description of Action	Action Date
Present proposed amendments to Board’s Wildlife Resources Committee	April 24, 2024
Public Notice distributed and posted on website	April 26, 2024
Virtual Public Hearing (live via WRD’s Facebook page at 7:00 P.M.)	May 21, 2024
Deadline for submitting comments on proposed amendment	May 27, 2024
Final Consideration of the Proposed Amendments by the Board of Natural Resources	June 25, 2024

WALTER RABON  
COMMISSIONER

TED WILL  
DIRECTOR

April 26, 2024

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: INTERESTED PERSONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

FROM: Ted Will

SUBJECT: **NOTICE AND SYNOPSIS OF PROPOSED RULE MAKING**

Notice is hereby given that, pursuant to authority contained in the Game and Fish Code (Official Code of Georgia Annotated, Secs. 27-1-3, 27-1-4, 27-4-10, 27-4-11, 27-4-11.1, and 27-4-12), the Board of Natural Resources proposes to amend Department of Natural Resources rules governing the size limits for Shoal Bass and creel limits for several black bass species. The proposed amendments (copy attached hereto), are to Rule 391-4-3-.05 and Rule 391-4-3-.06, pertaining to creel and possession limits and size limits, respectively.

**SYNOPSIS AND MAIN FEATURES**

The purpose of fishing regulations is to manage Georgia's fishery resources according to sound principles of fisheries management and to meet public objectives for use of these renewable natural resources. Changes to the existing rules are responsive to customer desires related to black bass fishing.

This notice and synopsis of the proposed rule revisions, together with an exact copy and a strikethrough/underline copy of the proposed rule revisions, is being mailed to all persons who have requested in writing that they be placed on the mailing list and have tendered the actual cost of such mailing. Copies of all these documents are also available by electronic mail and are available for review on the Division web page ([www.gofishgeorgia.com](http://www.gofishgeorgia.com)). Please call the Fisheries Management Section at (706) 557-3305 to request a copy.

Members of the public may comment on these proposed changes electronically by email through the Division website, by telephone (706-557-3305), or by submitting written statements by close of business on May 27, 2024. Written statements should be emailed to [FM.comments@dnr.ga.gov](mailto:FM.comments@dnr.ga.gov) or mailed to the attention of Fisheries Management Section at:

Department of Natural Resources  
Wildlife Resources Division  
2067 U.S. Highway 278, S.E.  
Social Circle, Georgia 30025

The Wildlife Resources Division will be holding a virtual public hearing regarding these proposed rule amendments on May 21, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. on its Facebook page [www.facebook.com/WildlifeResourcesDivisionGADNR](https://www.facebook.com/WildlifeResourcesDivisionGADNR).

The Board of Natural Resources will consider the proposed rule and any comments received during the public comment process at its June 25, 2024, meeting at 9:00 A.M. at 2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, SE, Suite 1252, Atlanta, Georgia. Please bring this notice to the attention of interested acquaintances.

TW/crp

Attachment: Proposed Rule

RULE	PROPOSED CHANGE	CURRENT REGULATION	CHANGE	JUSTIFICATION
<b>391-4-3-.05(1)(a-f) Creel and Possession Limits</b>				
Creel and Possession Limits on Black Bass	10 fish combined limit for black bass but only 5 fish can be Altamaha bass, Bartram's bass, Chattahoochee bass, Redeye bass, Shoal bass, Smallmouth bass, Suwannee bass, Tallapoosa bass.	10 fish combined limit for Largemouth bass, Smallmouth bass, Shoal bass, Suwannee bass, Spotted or Kentucky bass, Redeye or Coosa bass.	Reduce daily creel limits for select black bass species.	Provides conservation for species with limited range in Georgia to help ensure them for future generations.
<b>391-4-3-.06(c) Size Limits</b>				
Size Limits Shoal Bass	Remove Lake Lanier specific size limits for Shoal Bass	Shoal Bass 14-in minimum length limit on Lake Lanier	15-in due to proposed statewide minimum length limit	Will be in conflict with new proposed regulation.
<b>391-4-3-.06(d) Size Limits</b>				
Size Limits Shoal Bass	Modify length limit for Lower Flint River	Shoal Bass 12-in minimum length limit on Flint River and its tributaries downstream of Warwick Dam	Illegal to possess Shoal Bass between 15-in and 20-in	Manage the population for trophy potential and protect larger fish from overharvest.
<b>391-4-3-.06(e) Size Limits</b>				
Size Limits Shoal Bass	Apply this limit statewide, except for the Flint River below Warwick Dam	Shoal Bass 15-in minimum length limit on Flint River and its tributaries above Warwick Dam	Expand this minimum length limit statewide	This regulation has proven effective on the Upper Flint River and the available data suggests it will also benefit most populations across Georgia.

**(ADDITIONS TO THE TEXT ARE UNDERLINED AND  
DELETED PORTIONS ARE INDICATED BY  
~~STRIKETHROUGH~~)**  
**RULES  
OF  
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

**CHAPTER 391-4  
WILDLIFE RESOURCES**

**SUBJECT 391-4-3  
FISHING REGULATIONS  
TABLE OF CONTENTS**

391-4-3-.05	Creel and Possession Limits
391-4-3-.06	Size Limits

**Rule 391-4-3-.05. Creel and Possession Limits**

In keeping with sound principles of wildlife research and management, creel and possession limits are:

~~(1) Ten (10) of any one or a combination of the following species, except only one (1) fish may be greater than twenty-two (22) inches from Lake Lindsay Grace:~~

- ~~-(a) Largemouth bass;~~
- ~~-(b) Smallmouth bass;~~
- ~~-(c) Shoal bass;~~
- ~~-(d) Suwannee bass;~~
- ~~-(e) Spotted bass or Kentucky bass;~~
- ~~-(f) Redeye or Coosa bass.~~

(1) Ten (10) of any one or a combination of the following species, except only five (5) may be of species (c)-(j) listed below as well as only one (1) fish may be greater than twenty-two (22) inches from Lake Lindsay Grace:

- (a) Largemouth bass or Florida bass;
- (b) Spotted bass or Kentucky bass or Alabama bass;
- (c) Altamaha bass;
- (d) Bartram's bass;
- (e) Chattahoochee bass;
- (f) Redeye or Coosa bass;
- (g) Shoal bass;
- (h) Smallmouth bass;
- (i) Suwannee bass;
- (j) Tallapoosa bass.

(2) Eight (8) of any one or a combination of mountain trout.

(3) Fifteen (15) of any one or a combination of the following species; provided, however, only two (2) fish may be twenty-two (22) inches or longer in length:

- (a) White bass;
- (b) Striped bass;
- (c) Striped-white bass hybrids.

(4) Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (3) to the contrary, from the North Newport River, the Medway River including Mount Hope Creek, the Little Ogeechee River, the



Ogeechee River, the Oconee River downstream of Georgia Highway 22 in Milledgeville, the Ocmulgee River downstream of the Georgia Highway 96 bridge between Houston and Twiggs counties, the Altamaha River, and the Satilla River; from the tributaries to such described sections; and from salt water as defined in O.C.G.A. 27-4-1two (2) of any one or a combination of the following species each of which must be twenty-two (22) inches or longer:

- (a) White bass;
- (b) Striped-white bass hybrids;
- (c) Striped bass.

(5) Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (3) to the contrary, from the Savannah River and its tributaries downstream of J. Strom Thurmond Dam two (2) of any one or a combination of the following species each of which must be twenty-seven (27) inches or longer:

- (a) White bass;
- (b) Striped-white bass hybrids;
- (c) Striped bass.

(6) Fifty (50) of any one or a combination of the game species, as defined by O.C.G.A. 27-1-2 of bream or sunfish;

(7) Eight (8) walleye (walleyed pike);

(8) Eight (8) sauger;

(9) Fifteen (15) of any one or a combination of the following species of pickerel:

- (a) Chain;
- (b) Grass;
- (c) Redfin.

(10) Thirty (30) of any one or a combination of the following species:

- (a) Black crappie;
- (b) White crappie.

(11) Eight (8) of any one or a combination of the following species:

- (a) American shad;
- (b) Hickory shad.

**Authority: O.C.G.A. Secs. 27-1-3, 27-1-4, 27-4-10, 27-4-12.**

**Rule 391-4-3-.06. Size Limits**

(1) Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 27-4-10 and in keeping with sound principles of wildlife research and management, fish of the following sizes may not be taken.

(a) It shall be unlawful to take or possess largemouth bass as follows:

1. Less than fourteen inches (14") in total length from Lake Oconee;
2. Less than fourteen inches (14") in total length from West Point Reservoir;
3. Less than fourteen inches (14") in total length from all public fishing areas operated by the department; provided, however, this shall not apply to lakes at public fishing areas which have been posted as having a different length limit for largemouth bass;
4. Less than fourteen inches (14") in total length from Walter F. George Reservoir;
5. Less than fourteen inches (14") in total length from Lake Blackshear;
6. Less than fourteen inches (14") in total length from Lake Lanier; and
7. From fifteen inches (15") to twenty-two inches (22") in total length from Lake Lindsay Grace in Wayne County.
8. Less than twelve inches (12") in total length from all other waters of this state; provided, however, there shall be no limitations on the sizes of largemouth bass taken from lakes Burton, Juliette on the Rum Creek Wildlife Management Area, and Blue Ridge.

(b) It shall be unlawful to take or possess spotted bass less than fourteen inches (14") in total length from Lake Lanier.

~~(c) It shall be unlawful to take or possess shoal bass less than fourteen inches (14") in total length from Lake Lanier.~~

(~~dc~~) It shall be unlawful to take or possess shoal bass from fifteen inches (15") to twenty inches (20") ~~less than twelve inches (12")~~ in total length from the Flint River or any of its tributary streams downstream of Warwick Dam (Lake Blackshear).

(~~ed~~) It shall be unlawful to take or possess shoal bass less than fifteen inches (15") in total length from the waters of this State except for the portion of the Flint River or any of its tributary streams ~~upstream~~ below Warwick Dam.

(~~fe~~) It shall be unlawful to take or possess brook trout less than eighteen inches (18") in total length or rainbow or brown trout less than twenty-two inches (22") in total length from Waters Creek upstream from its junction with Dick's Creek.

(~~gf~~) It shall be unlawful to take or possess mountain trout less than sixteen inches (16") in total length from Noontootla Creek or its tributaries within the Blue Ridge Wildlife Management Area.

(2) Except as otherwise provided by law, rule or regulation, there shall be no other size limits on freshwater fish species listed in O.C.G.A. § 27-4-10.

**Authority: O.C.G.A. Secs. 27-1-3, 27-1-4, 27-4-10, 27-4-11, 27-4-11.1, and 27-4-12.**

**(EXACT COPY)  
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**CHAPTER 391-4  
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**Rule 391-4-3-.05. Creel and Possession Limits**

In keeping with sound principles of wildlife research and management, creel and possession limits are:

(1) Ten (10) of any one or a combination of the following species, except only five (5) may be of species (c)-(j) listed below as well as only one (1) fish may be greater than twenty-two (22) inches from Lake Lindsay Grace:

- (a) Largemouth bass or Florida bass;
- (b) Spotted bass or Kentucky bass or Alabama bass;
- (c) Altamaha bass;
- (d) Bartram's bass;
- (e) Chattahoochee bass;
- (f) Redeye or Coosa bass;
- (g) Shoal bass;
- (h) Smallmouth bass;
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- (j) Tallapoosa bass.

(2) Eight (8) of any one or a combination of mountain trout.

(3) Fifteen (15) of any one or a combination of the following species; provided, however, only two (2) fish may be twenty-two (22) inches or longer in length:

- (a) White bass;
- (b) Striped bass;
- (c) Striped-white bass hybrids.

(4) Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (3) to the contrary, from the North Newport River, the Medway River including Mount Hope Creek, the Little Ogeechee River, the Ogeechee River, the Oconee River downstream of Georgia Highway 22 in Milledgeville, the Ocmulgee River downstream of the Georgia Highway 96 bridge between Houston and Twiggs counties, the Altamaha River, and the Satilla River; from the tributaries to such described sections; and from salt water as defined in O.C.G.A. 27-4-1two (2) of any one or a combination of the following species each of which must be twenty-two (22) inches or longer:

- (a) White bass;

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  - (a) White bass;
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- (6) Fifty (50) of any one or a combination of the game species, as defined by O.C.G.A. 27-1-2 of bream or sunfish;
- (7) Eight (8) walleye (walleyed pike);
- (8) Eight (8) sauger;
- (9) Fifteen (15) of any one or a combination of the following species of pickerel:
  - (a) Chain;
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- (10) Thirty (30) of any one or a combination of the following species:
  - (a) Black crappie;
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- (11) Eight (8) of any one or a combination of the following species:
  - (a) American shad;
  - (b) Hickory shad.

**Authority: O.C.G.A. Secs. 27-1-3, 27-1-4, 27-4-10, 27-4-12.**

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2. Less than fourteen inches (14") in total length from West Point Reservoir;
3. Less than fourteen inches (14") in total length from all public fishing areas operated by the department; provided, however, this shall not apply to lakes at public fishing areas which have been posted as having a different length limit for largemouth bass;
4. Less than fourteen inches (14") in total length from Walter F. George Reservoir;
5. Less than fourteen inches (14") in total length from Lake Blackshear;
6. Less than fourteen inches (14") in total length from Lake Lanier; and
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8. Less than twelve inches (12") in total length from all other waters of this state; provided, however, there shall be no limitations on the sizes of largemouth bass taken from lakes Burton, Juliette on the Rum Creek Wildlife Management Area, and Blue Ridge.

(b) It shall be unlawful to take or possess spotted bass less than fourteen inches (14") in total length from Lake Lanier.

(c) It shall be unlawful to take or possess shoal bass from fifteen inches (15") to twenty inches (20") in total length from the Flint River or any of its tributary streams downstream of Warwick Dam (Lake Blackshear).

(d) It shall be unlawful to take or possess shoal bass less than fifteen inches (15") in total length from the waters of this State except for the portion of the Flint River or any of its tributary streams below Warwick Dam.

(e) It shall be unlawful to take or possess brook trout less than eighteen inches (18") in total length or rainbow or brown trout less

than twenty-two inches (22") in total length from Waters Creek upstream from its junction with Dick's Creek.

(f) It shall be unlawful to take or possess mountain trout less than sixteen inches (16") in total length from Noontootla Creek or its tributaries within the Blue Ridge Wildlife Management Area.

(2) Except as otherwise provided by law, rule or regulation, there shall be no other size limits on freshwater fish species listed in O.C.G.A. § 27-4-10.

**Authority: O.C.G.A. Secs. 27-1-3, 27-1-4, 27-4-10, 27-4-11, 27-4-11.1, and 27-4-12.**