

Legislative 101 - Fishing Regulations

As a person who is active in the outdoors, I always knew the importance of following the Michigan Department of Resources (DNR) fishing regulations.

In the past, I used to pick up a copy of the Fishing Guide when I renewed my license. These days, I prefer the online version.

For a long time, the concept of how fishing regulations were developed and enacted was a mystery to me.

Recently I got intrigued by the subject and decided to find out more from some of my friends at Metro West Steelheaders.

Many entities participate in the development of new fishing regulations.

1. The Natural Resources Commission (NRC)

This is a seven-member public body appointed by the Governor. The NRC, better known as the Commission, has exclusive authority to regulate the taking of game and sportfish, is authorized to designate game species, and the establishment of the first open season for animals through the issuance of orders.

The NRC conducts and facilitates public meetings around the state to discuss conservation issues. They also listen to and consider the current fishery science from fisheries experts before making decisions.

The NRC then creates and approves any new regulations or deletes any which may not be needed any longer.

https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-350-79137_79763_79909---,00.html

2. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

This is a government agency responsible for the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations. The Fisheries Division of the DNR monitors fish populations via surveys, plants fish and conducts research to support the science of fisheries management.

The DNR enforces fishing regulations through its Law Enforcement Division.

<https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-350-79137---,00.html>

3. Conservation Clubs

One of the best-known conservation groups around the state is the Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC). MUCC serves as an umbrella over 200+ clubs, including the Michigan Steelhead and Salmon Fishermen's Association (MSSFA) and Metro West Steelheaders (MWS.)

[Home - Michigan United Conservation Clubs](#)

The conservation clubs provide input both to the DNR and NRC to help safeguard our natural resources, and to enact practical and fair regulations.

In addition, conservation groups, such as MUCC can develop resolutions, get them approved thru their organization, then submit them to the Fisheries Division of the DNR. The resolution will get evaluated and modified, if needed. The DNR then submits the resolution to the NRC where it may get approved, modified, or rejected.

<https://mucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Path-to-Policy-Resolution-Infographic-updated.pdf>

4. Citizenry

We, the citizens of Michigan, are encouraged to get familiar with and contribute to this process by getting involved in our local conservation clubs, attending the NRC meetings, and contacting our local DNR representatives, NRC commissioners and/or our Governor.

More recently, the NRC reduced the bag limit of steelhead on four Michigan rivers from 3 to 1, for the period of March 15 to May 15.

[Steelhead bag limits reduced in some Michigan waters amid fish declines | Bridge Michigan](#)

I hope this helps explain at a high level how regulations are developed and put into action.

For more information on this subject, check the DNR website.

Submitted: Jay Labban, MWS CC Chair 2/1/2022