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Fish and Wildlife Branch - Kootenay Region
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Kootenay Region Angling Regulations Proposed Changes for 2007-08

INTRODUCTION

The following document summarizes changes to angling regulations currently under consideration for Kootenay Region waters. These changes, if approved, will be effective and appear in the Freshwater Fishing Regulations Synopsis beginning April 1, 2007. We welcome and will consider your comments as we finalize changes to the regulations.

Proposals for regulation changes result from requests by Rod and Gun Clubs, other non-government organizations, and the public at large. Others we develop from technical studies of trends in fish populations and angler use in the region. This document provides some of this background to assist you in understanding the rationale for each regulation change proposal.

WILL THERE BE A PUBLIC MEETING?

Due to poor past attendance, we are not holding public meetings for comment this year; instead, we are asking that you follow the approach this document outlines to contact us with your concerns and recommendations. This will allow you time to discuss with your colleagues and organize your ideas in writing. We hope to hear from a range of people, including those who may otherwise be unable to attend a meeting or are reluctant to speak in public.

WHO CAN COMMENT?

Anyone with an interest in freshwater sport fishing in British Columbia can comment.

HOW CAN I COMMENT?

We will accept comments in number of forms. In order of preference, your options are:

- (a) electronically via email to fishing.surveys@gov.bc.ca;
- (b) conventional mail to the Nelson office of the Ministry of Environment, at the address noted at the top of this document;
- (c) via FAX to Nelson office of the Ministry of Environment at 250-354-6332.

To assist us in getting the best possible information, **please use the forms we provide in this package**. An MS Word file is available from the web site should you wish to use a computer.

WHAT IS THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS?

The deadline for submission of comments is August 20, 2006. Comments that you provide later than this date may not be timely enough to consider in the development of final regulations proposals.

HOW WILL THE MINISTRY USE MY COMMENTS?

Angling regulations meet three main objectives:

- (a) address fish conservation concerns;
- (b) improve the quality of angling by restricting angler use and fish harvests; and,
- (c) provide a range angling experiences to meet the diverse expectations of the angling community.

Simplification of regulations is also important, where simplification improves or at least does not affect these objectives. We will consider your comments wherever possible, in light of all three objectives. Ultimately, however, fish conservation receives highest priority in the final decision on any regulation change.

PRIVACY POLICY

The Government of British Columbia is committed to protecting the privacy of people whose personal information is held by government through responsible information management practices. Any personal information provided to the Government of B.C. is collected, used and disclosed in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act or other applicable legislation.

Kootenay Region Angling Regulations Proposed Changes for 2007-08

Regulation number: R40708-01

Location: various

Management Unit: all

Proposal: Implement regulations to control the spread of illegally introduced, non-native fish species. Options under consideration include the following:

- (a) Curtail general regional angling opportunities for yellow perch, bass, northern pike, and walleye to deter illegal stocking activities. Options include “no fishing for” or quota = 0 for these species in Kootenay Region.
- (b) When instances of illegal stocking occur, implement restrictive regulation measures, potentially including complete angling closures until control or eradication of the non-native species is possible. This approach is underway in the Haha Creek watershed, and will be for any other circumstances involving northern pike in particular.
- (c) In order to provide for regulated and limited opportunities for some existing yellow perch, bass, and walleye populations, or to incorporate sport harvest as a control option for these species, allow angling or harvest in a limited set of Kootenay waterbodies. Examples are Duck Lake (bass), Columbia River (walleye), and Jim Smith Lake (yellow perch).

Rationale: Illegal transplants of non-native fish species have been a concern for fisheries managers for decades and have recently become a critical issue. In B.C. there are now over six times as many freshwater systems containing these species than when they were first documented in the early 1950s. The recent discovery of northern pike in the Haha Lake watershed in the East Kootenay presents a case in point. In this instance, the lake already contained illegally transplanted yellow perch and largemouth bass, and poorly informed individual[s] recently transplanted northern pike.



Figure 1. Northern pike captured by gill net during rehabilitation work on Haha Lake, 2006.

While such introductions may seem harmless or even beneficial to anglers, they are a tremendous threat to aquatic ecosystems. Impacts to native fish from predation and competition, as well as the transfer of diseases and parasites, are key concerns. Northern pike, for example, carry tapeworm parasites that can transfer to native fish (bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, kokanee, and others), embedding in muscle tissue and both spoiling table quality

as well as compromising fish health. Accordingly, the Haha Lake watershed in the East Kootenay was closed in 2006 following the discovery of northern pike in that system, to prevent access to and further transplants from the lake.

Managers and anglers must take action to safeguard remaining native fish resources. Costs to remove and prevent the spread of transplanted species are high, and such efforts are not always successful. As a result, options to proactively discourage illegal transplants are important and the regulations we propose move in this direction. The Ministry will also undertake other control and eradication measures as resources permit.

Legal sanctions already exist: persons responsible for illegal introductions are subject to penalties of up to \$100,000 for a first offence, and subsequent infractions may result in prison terms of up to 12 months. Note that the BC Wildlife Federation is offering a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the successful prosecution of individuals responsible for illegal introductions of fish in BC. Please report any suspicious activity to the Conservation Officer Service (1-877-952-7277).

Regulation number: R40708-02

Location: various

Management Unit: all

Proposal: Increase Region 4 general quota for kokanee from 10 to 15 per day. Note that waters with specially listed kokanee quotas, such as Upper and Lower Arrow Lakes, and Upper and Lower West Arm (of Kootenay Lake), and the Columbia River below Keenleyside Dam will retain existing quotas.

Rationale: The primary objective of this change is to simplify the angling regulations. Kokanee are an abundant and often lightly harvested sport fish where they occur in the Kootenays. Some waters such as Lake Koocanusa, Kinbasket (McNaughton) Lake and Moyie Lake have daily quotas of 15 fish to reflect this situation. Where conservation concerns exist, there are specially reduced quotas of 5 per day. In the few other instances where specific kokanee regulations are not in place, the general Regional quota of 10 applies. However, few such examples exist and there is no evidence of fisheries extensive enough to create a conservation issue if the Regional quota were simply increased to 15. This would allow a slight liberalization of kokanee harvests in a few instances, and reduce the need to refer to specific quotas of 15 fish per day on some waters.



Figure 2. Spawning kokanee.

Regulation number: WK0708-01

Location: Big Sheep Creek

Management Unit: 4-9

Proposal: Remove Sept 1-Oct 31 angling closure for this water.

Rationale: A fall angling closure protects spawning Eastern brook trout in Big Sheep Creek. However, Eastern brook trout are an introduced species in Kootenay Region and present a potential biological threat to native species in the area. In recognition of this issue, fisheries managers propose rescinding the fall closure, and reverting to regional regulations. This management action is not expected to eliminate Eastern brook trout from this location, but may reduce its numbers, limits the potential for spread and related impacts, and simplifies the regulations.

Regulation number: WK0708-02

Location: Little Sheep Creek

Management Unit: 4-9

Proposal: Remove Sept 1-Oct 31 angling closure for this water.

Rationale: A fall angling closure protects spawning Eastern brook trout in Little Sheep Creek. However, Eastern brook trout are an introduced species in Kootenay Region and present a potential biological threat to native species in the area. In recognition of this issue, fisheries managers propose rescinding the fall closure, and reverting to regional regulations. This management action is not expected to eliminate the species from this location, but may reduce its numbers, limits the potential for spread and related impacts, and simplifies the regulations.

Regulation number: WK0708-03

Location: Kitchener (Meadow) Creek

Management Unit: 4-6

Proposal: Remove Sept 1-Oct 31 portion of angling closure for this water.

Rationale: A fall angling closure protects spawning Eastern brook trout in Kitchener Creek. However, Eastern brook trout are an introduced species in Kootenay Region and present a potential biological threat to native species in the area. In recognition of this issue, fisheries managers propose rescinding the fall closure. Kitchener Creek would continue to remain exempt from the general regional spring closure. This management action is not expected to eliminate the species from this location, but may reduce its numbers, limits the potential for spread and related impacts, and simplifies the regulations.

Regulation number: EK0708-01

Location: Cartwright Lake

Management Unit: 4-34

Proposal: Add new regulations for this water, including trout daily quota = 1 (none under 40 cm); bait ban, single hook; and, a winter fishing closure.

Rationale: These regulations are intended to improve fishing quality and increase angling effort at Cartwright Lake. The lake is being stocked with Blackwater AF3N (all female, sterile) rainbow trout which, if not harvested, can grow to a large enough size (i.e. approximately 40 cm) to feed on reidside shiners stocked illegally at this location. These regulations are intended to allow more trout to reach a large enough size to take advantage of the shiners as an alternate food source. Additionally, our approach is designed to shift or spread out some of the increasing angler effort on the existing quality small lake fisheries in the Brisco area by attracting more angler effort to Cartwright Lake. Angler effort at Cartwright Lake has significantly decreased in the last 10 years, likely due to impacts on angling quality resulting from the illegal reidside shiner introduction.

Regulation number: EK0708-02

Location: Loon Lake (Grassmere)

Management Unit: 4-2

Proposal: Add new regulations for this water, including trout daily quota = 1 (none under 40 cm); and, bait ban, single hook.

Rationale: These regulations are intended to improve fishing quality and increase angling effort at Loon Lake. The lake is being stocked with Blackwater AF3N (all female, sterile) rainbow trout which, if not harvested, can grow to a large enough size (i.e. approximately 40 cm) to feed on reidside shiners stocked illegally at this location. These regulations are intended to allow more trout to reach a large enough size to take advantage of the shiners as an alternate food source. Additionally, our approach is designed to shift or spread out some of the increasing angler effort on the existing quality small lake fisheries in the Cranbrook/Grassmere area by attracting more angler effort to Loon Lake.

Regulation number: EK0708-03

Location: Fish Lake (in Top of the World Park)

Management Unit: 4-21

Proposal: Remove special regulations and revert to the standard regional regulations for this lake.

Rationale: Fish Lake currently supports high densities of westslope cutthroat trout. These fish are self sustaining (not stocked). Success of natural spawning controls the numbers of trout entering the lake. The population has reached a level where the abundance of fish is reducing fish size; food resources are inadequate to allow fish to attain larger sizes that anglers prefer. The proposed regulation has several potential benefits: provides an opportunity for anglers to increase their harvests from 2 trout per day to 4, may reduce thereby the number of trout in the population resulting in potentially larger fish sizes over the long term, and simplifies regional fishing regulations.

Regulation number: EK0708-04

Location: St. Mary River and major tributaries

Management Unit: 4-20

Proposal: Apply the following additional and revised restrictions to some or all reaches of the river and some or all major tributaries (i.e. Dewar, Meachen, Redding, and White Creeks):

- (a) bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout release;
- (b) year round bait ban.

Rationale: The St. Mary River supports a popular catch-and-release fishery. Anglers and angling guides have expressed an interest in foregoing harvest in favour of increased numbers of fish. Expanding trout/char release zones and restricting the use of bait in the winter will assist in meeting that objective. These proposed changes will also benefit bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout conservation, and simplify the regulations for this system.

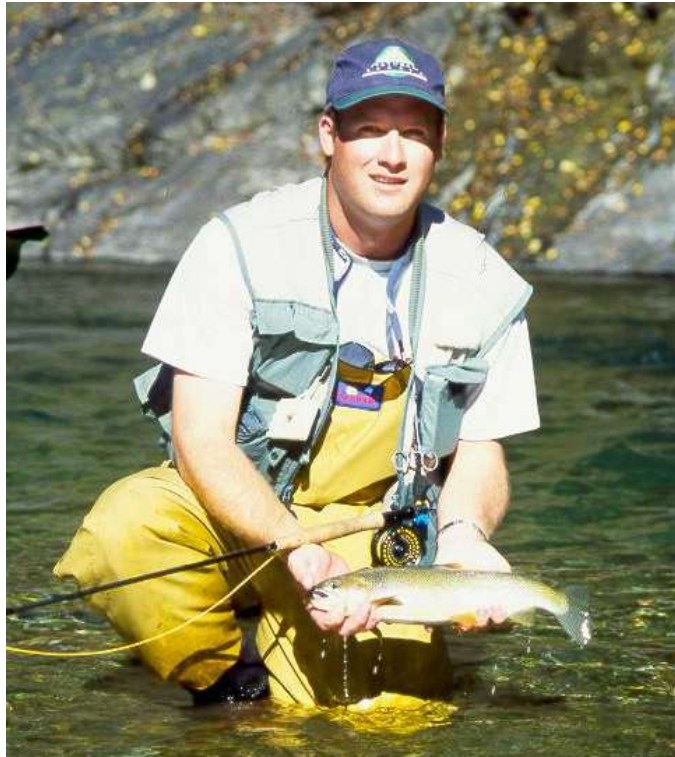


Figure 3. Catch-and-release in the East Kootenays.

Regulation number: EK0708-05

Location: Columbia Lake, Windermere Lake

Management Unit: 4-25

Proposal: Burbot release.

Rationale: The public, Conservation Officers, and First Nations have voiced concerns over declining burbot populations in the East Kootenay in the past few years. The species is extirpated or nearly so in some locations (e.g. Spillimacheen River), and other areas are at risk. Studies to better understand the status of these populations are presently underway. Work in 2005 resulted in implementation of a burbot release regulation on St. Mary Lake beginning April 1 2006. Ongoing studies on Moyie Lake suggest a reasonable population able to support a modest fishery; the fishery remains open but is of concern due to reported growth of the fishery. Biologists will examine Windermere and Columbia lakes in fall 2006 and the results of this assessment may require a restriction of burbot harvest until such time as the population can sustainably support a harvest.

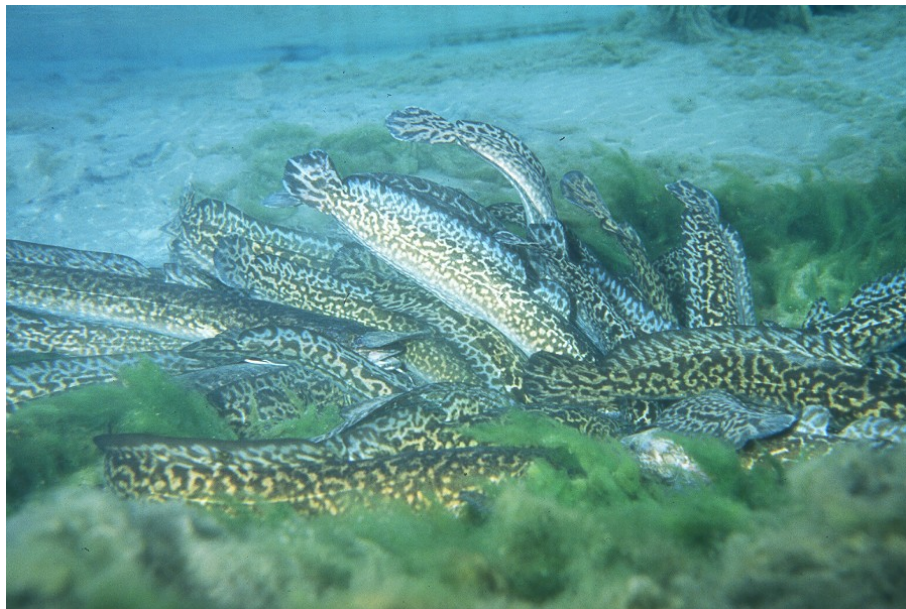


Figure 4. Spawning burbot in the upper Columbia River.

Kootenay Region Angling Regulations Consultation on Proposed Changes for 2007-08

Consultation Feedback

Thank you for taking the time to document your concerns and suggestions. The information you provide is important to us and will be considered thoroughly. We will not be able to respond individually to each submission.

Contact Information	
Name:	
Address:	
Email:	
Telephone & fax:	
Representing:	Club or organization if applicable; indicate your position (e.g. president, etc.)

Comments on Proposed Changes to Region 4 Regulations		
Regulation Number	Agree With Proposal? (check one)	Comments and Concerns (attach additional pages if desired)
	yes _____ med _____ low _____ no _____	
	yes _____ med _____ low _____ no _____	
	yes _____ med _____ low _____ no _____	

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Regulation Number	Agree With Proposal? (check one)	Comments and Concerns (attach additional pages if desired)
	yes ____ med ____ low ____ no ____	
	yes ____ med ____ low ____ no ____	
	yes ____ med ____ low ____ no ____	
	yes ____ med ____ low ____ no ____	
Other ideas and concerns not described in the proposals:		