Connecticut's BASS MANAGEMENT LAKES

MORE BASS FISHING OPPORTUNITIES!

State of Connecticut
Department of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Natural Resources
Inland Fisheries Division

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO HAVE A BASS MANAGEMENT PLAN?

Connecticut's warmwater fisheries, particularly with regard to largemouth and smallmouth bass, are an important part of the State's overall angling activity.

In addition, general interest in bass fishing and sophistication of fishing techniques continues to increase.

With both increased interest and fishing pressure comes an increasing need for innovative and effective management to sustain and enhance angling quality among Connecticut's warmwater fisheries.

creel survey-interviewing anglers.

FISHERIES DATA AND PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS

DEP fisheries managers felt strongly that any change in management or regulations should be based on both angling public desires and sound, scientific understanding of the status of the fishery.

For this reason, DEP undertook preliminary surveys of angler attitudes in Connecticut as well as electrofishing surveys in a substantial number of lakes across the State.

The results of the angler surveys indicated that the public desires higher quality fishing than they currently experience, and that they favor alternative, lake-specific management to reach this goal.

The statewide electrofishing survey revealed that angling quality could be improved in many of Connecticut's lakes and ponds through alternative management.

Electrofishing Mansfield Hollow Reservoir.

INFORMATION FROM THE ELECTROFISHING SURVEY

The electrofishing survey identified the following significant problems/conditions which could be corrected or capitalized on through alternative management to improve the fishery:

1. **High bass mortality.** Annual mortality of legal size bass (over the 12-inch minimum size limit) was high in over half of the lakes surveyed. This is almost certainly due to excessive harvest relative to the numbers of bass available. This has resulted in low densities of bass over 12 inches, which adversely affects angling quality.

2. **Bass stockpiling.** In 39% of the lakes and ponds surveyed, an overabundance of bass smaller than 12 inches exists. This stockpiling occurs when recruitment (numbers of fish spawned that survive) significantly exceeds predation by larger fish. High densities of small fish causes increased competition for limited food supplies, resulting in reduced growth rates. Growth of these stockpiled fish to "catchable" size is severely retarded.

3. **Panfish stockpiling.** In 53% of the lakes and ponds surveyed, an overabundance of small panfish was identified. Panfish become stockpiled for the same reasons bass do, and with the same negative effect on angling quality. In some severe cases, panfish are so overabundant that stunting has occurred and fish die of old age before reaching catchable size.

4. **Surplus forage.** 59% of the lakes and ponds surveyed contain surplus forage fish populations (alewives, shiners, killifish, etc.) which could be utilized to support an increased population of larger predators.

WHAT ARE THE MANAGEMENT TOOLS WE CAN USE?

Experimentation in Connecticut as well as experience nationwide has indicated that protective slot limits and/or increased minimum length limits can significantly improve angling quality both for bass and panfish.

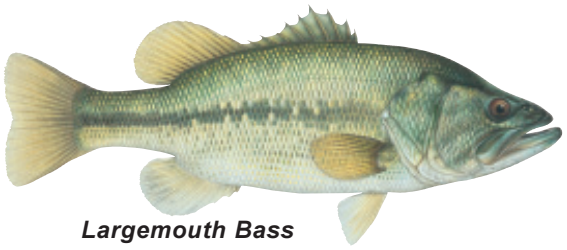
- Where bass recruitment is low (few fish are born and survive to catchable size), a higher **minimum length limit** with a **reduced creel limit** will reduce mortality on larger bass .

  Increased numbers of large bass will also increase predation on overabundant panfish, which will in turn improve growth rates of these fishes.

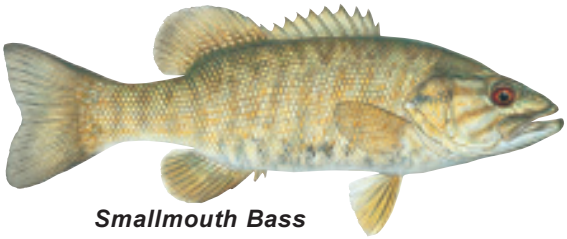
- When small bass are overabundant and stockpiled below the 12-inch limit, a **slot limit** (such as a 12" to 16" protected range) with a reduced creel limit for larger bass will increase the abundance of large bass that anglers most want to catch.

  A slot limit will also allow anglers to harvest some fish and help reduce the numbers of overabundant smaller bass.

  Increased numbers of larger bass will also increase predation on smaller bass and panfish, which will in turn improve growth rates in these fisheries.

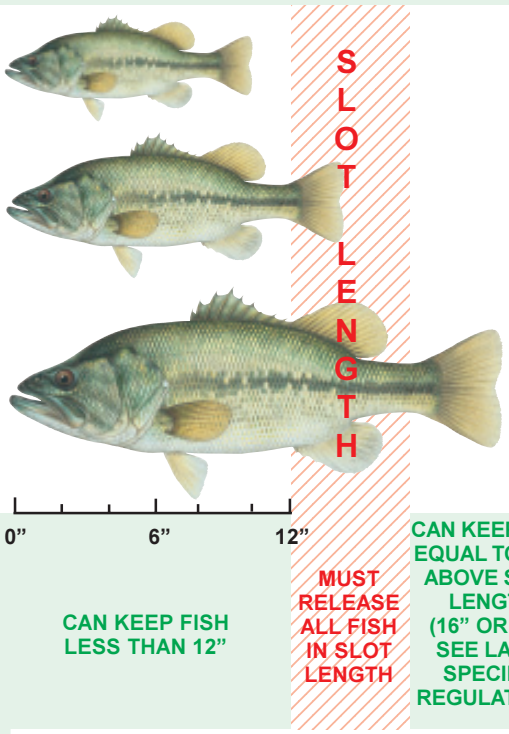


Largemouth Bass



Smallmouth Bass

BASS PROTECTED SLOT LENGTH



SLOT LIMITS:

- Measure fish from the tip of the snout to the end of the tail.
- Release all fish within the slot specified (equal to and greater than the lower limit and less than the upper limit).
- Bass (largemouth & smallmouth) below the lower end of the slot OR equal to and above the upper end of the slot may be kept.

See the list of Bass Management Areas for lakes, length & slot limits, and creel limits. For complete site-specific information, please refer to the Connecticut Angler's Guide

The Bass Management Plan is the culmination of a 13 year Sport Fish Restoration Project F-57-R entitled *Inland Fisheries Research and Management*: *Statewide Lake and Pond Survey*. The Sport Fish Restoration Program is administered through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is supported by your purchase of fishing equipment and motorboat fuels.

SO, WHAT'S THE PLAN?

The management plan, and the new regulations to implement it, focuses on lakes where we can increase the numbers of large bass.

Anglers can expect to see more large bass in many new Bass Management lakes within 3-5 years of implementation..

Two general types of "Bass Management Areas" are included in the plan:

1. "**BIG BASS**" lakes - where the goal is to increase the numbers of quality bass.

2. "**TROPHY BASS**" lakes - where the goal is to develop a trophy-class fishery.

TROPHY BASS MANAGEMENT AREAS

SLOT LIMIT-12 to 18 inches, **DAILY CREEL LIMIT**-6 bass, of which not more than 1 bass may be equal to or over 18 inches:

Amos Lake, *Preston*
Moodus Reservoir, *East Haddam*
Mudge Pond, *Sharon*
Pattagansett Lake, *East Lyme*

MINIMUM LENGTH-18 inches, **DAILY CREEL LIMIT**-1 bass:

Lake Saltonstall, *Branford-East Haven*

BIG BASS MANAGEMENT AREAS

MINIMUM LENGTH-16 inches, **DAILY CREEL LIMIT**-2 bass:

Gardner Lake, *Salem-Bozrah-Montville*
Highland Lake, *Winchester*
Housatonic Lake, *Shltn-Drby-Mnro-Oxfd-Symr*
Mohegan Park Pond, *Norwich*
Quinebaug Lake, *Killingly*
Taftville Reservoir, *Norwich*
Wyassup Lake, *North Stonnington*

SLOT LIMIT-12 to 16 inches, **DAILY CREEL LIMIT**-6 bass, of which no more than 2 bass may be equal to or over 16 inches:

Bashan Lake, *Bashan*
Billings Lake, *North Stonington*
Black Pond, *Meriden-Middlefield*
Bolton Lakes (Upper, Middle, and Lower), *Bolton-Coventry-Vernon*
Lake Chamberlain, *Bethany*
Colebrook Flood Control Impoundment, *Colebrook-MA*
Coventry Lake (Wangumbaug Lake), *Coventry*
Halls Pond, *Eastford-Ashford*
Hayward Lake, *East Haddam*
Lake Kenosia, *Danbury*
Maltby Lakes (1,2,3), *Orange-West Haven*
Mamanasco Lake, *Ridgefield*
Mansfield Hollow Reservoir, *Mansfield*
Mashapaug Lake, *Union*
Pickerel Lake, *Colchester-East Haddam*
West Side Pond, *Goshen*
Wononscopomuc Lake, *Salisbury*

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