



TWRA NEWS

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TWRA REQUESTS PUBLIC INPUT FOR SPORT FISHING REGULATIONS

TWRA RESPONDS TO BLACK BASS ID QUESTIONS

TWRC TO MEET IN NASHVILLE

TWRA REQUESTS PUBLIC INPUT FOR NEW SPORT FISHING REGULATIONS

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) is soliciting comments for its 2009 sport fishing regulations. This is an opportunity for the public to share ideas and concerns about fishing regulations with TWRA staff.

Public comments will be considered by fisheries managers and may be presented as proposals for regulation changes. Comments may be submitted by mail to: *Sport Fish Comments*, TWRA, Fisheries Management Division, P.O. 40747, Nashville, TN 27204 or emailed to twra.comment@state.tn.us. Please include “Sport Fish Comments” on the subject line of emailed submissions.

This comment period concerning sport fish regulations will be open until April 30, 2008.

TWRA RESPONDS TO BLACK BASS IDENTIFICATION QUESTIONS

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) recently became aware of an oversight in the 2008 Tennessee Fishing Guide that has resulted in considerable confusion for some black bass anglers. The confusion relates to the statement on page 14 of the fishing guide that reads "Any Black Bass with a tooth patch to be considered a Spotted Bass."

Although the term Black Bass typically refers to largemouth, smallmouth, spotted and Coosa bass, TWRA never intended the tooth patch to be the only species characteristic to be used to differentiate smallmouth from spotted bass. Rather this characteristic was to be used to differentiate a largemouth bass from a spotted bass for regulation purposes only. A tooth patch is exactly what the words imply-a series of teeth in the tongue-the same type teeth that are on the jaw.

Species identification is normally the angler's responsibility. However, TWRA developed the current tooth patch regulation in 1999 to reduce or eliminate confusion over distinguishing spotted bass from largemouth bass, particularly in interactions between wildlife officers and anglers. It was intended to be a convenience to the angler and wildlife officer not an absolute species determining characteristic-hence the use of the word "considered."

For enforcement purposes if the fish in question had a tooth patch it would be considered a spotted bass not a largemouth bass. Largemouth bass rarely have a tooth patch (about one out of 100-150) so TWRA felt that using this characteristic would help reduce angler-officer conflicts. Smallmouth bass were never part of this distinction because their brown coloration easily distinguishes them from the other two species. Although the wording changed slightly in this year's fishing guide, the regulation is the same now as it was in 1999.

This issue was further complicated this year because of an inaccurate statement on page 38 in the fishing guide that indicated that smallmouth bass do not have a tooth patch. This is not the case in many parts of Tennessee where a tooth patch may be present in smallmouth. The TWRA is asking anglers to ignore the statement regarding a tooth patch in smallmouth bass, to practice ethical angling in regard to creel and length limits, and to use common sense when identifying black bass. The pictures on page 38 of the fishing guide are still accurate-the smallmouth is the brown bass that looks nothing like a spotted or largemouth bass. A smallmouth is a smallmouth, whether it has a tooth patch or not.

TWRC TO MEET IN NASHVILLE

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Commission (TWRC) will meet in Nashville on April 23 and 24, 2008.

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Commission (TWRC) is the governing body of the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) and is responsible for enacting rules, regulations and laws regarding hunting seasons, bag limits, methods of harvest and other regulations. During the April TWRC meeting each year, the regulations for the upcoming season are presented, which allows the TWRC a thirty-day comment period from the public before the annual season setting meeting held in May.

Committee meetings will take place on Wednesday, April 23 starting at 1:00 p.m. CST and the actual Commission meeting will be Thursday, April 24 beginning at 9:00 a.m. CST.