

## Illegal Stocking of Fish

Alberta regulations prohibit the transfer of live game fish or live bait fish or crayfish from one waterbody to another. The placing of any live fish or fish eggs into any waters of the province other than those from which they were taken is prohibited.

Report anyone you observe relocating live fish or using live fish for bait to the nearest Fish and Wildlife Office, or call Report A Poacher toll-free, 1-800-642-3800. The fishery resource that you are protecting is your own.

## General Sportfishing Restrictions

### It Is Unlawful To:

- Possess or use a gaff or gaff hook.
- Use more than one line when angling into open water.
- Use more than two lines when angling into ice-covered water.
- While angling, be further than 30 m from any line in the water.
- Use a line in angling equipped with more than three hooks (e.g., three hooks, or three single-hook lures, or one three-hook lure).
- Use a lure in angling with more than three hooks as part of it.
- Use a hook with more than three points on a common shaft (see Important Definitions, Page 15).
- Release live fish or live fish eggs into any waters except back to the waters from which they were caught.
- Possess live crayfish. (See also Page 23)
- Possess live fish – unless the fish have been lawfully caught and are within 5 metres of the waters from which they were caught.

- Fizz fish – it is undue harm and reduces survival of released fish.
- Use live fish for bait.
- Use amphibians, such as frogs and salamanders, as bait.
- Dispose of unused bait within 50 metres of waterbodies except in a regularly serviced waste disposal receptacle.
- Set out or use bait to attract fish unless it is attached to a hook used in angling (that is chumming).
- Fish by snagging.
- Possess fish taken by snagging.
- Possess a snagging device (such as a gaff or gaff hook) while angling.
- Use gaffs, gaff hooks or spring-loaded hooks (spring-loaded hooks incorporate a device that snags/traps/holds the fish).
- Use snares, firearms, or any device to attract, stun or kill fish by causing an explosion or electrical current in the water.
- Use lights to sportfish unless the light is attached to a hook or line used in angling. This includes visible lights that are emitted by underwater cameras.
- Clean fish for transport home in a manner that is not authorized (see Cleaning and Transporting Fish, Page 25).

### Additional Restrictions:

- The edible flesh of legally kept game fish must not be wasted, destroyed, spoiled or abandoned.
- Fish must not be removed from, or disturbed in, any facility or structure designed to capture, hold or facilitate the passage of fish.
- Fishing is prohibited by any method within 23 metres downstream of the lower entrance of any fishway, canal, obstacle or leap. Weirs and dams are considered obstacles.
- NOTE: Fishways, fish ladders, impoundment nets, fish traps and other similar structures may be set up to assist in the management or the study of fisheries, or to allow the passage of fish.

## Catch Limits

In this guide the word limit refers to the number of fish you are allowed to keep or have in your possession. As outlined below, you may not exceed the Daily Catch Limit at any waterbody fished, nor possess more fish than the Maximum Possession.

**Releasing Live Fish** – If the fish you catch is of a legal species and legal size, immediately decide to keep it as part of your Daily Catch Limit or release it. Fish kept on a stringer or a live well are considered retained and are part of your limit. See Pages 22 and 25 for details on releasing fish.

**Possession** – While a person is angling, a fish is considered retained (in possession) when it is not immediately released to the waters from which it was taken.

**Daily Catch Limit** – The number of fish you are allowed to keep while fishing in one day is equal to the limit listed for each species or group of species at the lake or stream being fished, including any fish eaten or given away that day. When you are fishing at any lake or stream, you may not have in your possession more fish than the limit, or fish other than those of legal size, listed for the lake or stream being fished.

*Catch Limits continued on page 22*

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# Regulations and Information

**Provincewide Maximum Possession** – All fish kept from any lake or stream, from any Watershed Unit, count as part of the Maximum Possession that must not be exceeded. An angler may never possess more fish from a specific lake or stream than the Daily Catch Limit, but may possess a cumulative total of Daily Catch Limits of fish from different lakes or streams up to the allowed Maximum Possession limit for each species.

**The Maximum Possession of fish you may have, including fish at your permanent residence, for each game fish species or group of species, including fish caught under a Special Harvest Licence, is listed below:**

- **Trout – 5 in total, combined of:**
  - 0 bull trout (native to Alberta)
  - 2 Northern Dolly Varden (historically released into Chester Lake);
  - 1 golden trout; 3 lake trout; 5 cutthroat trout; 5 rainbow trout;
  - 5 brown trout; 5 brook trout. 5 tiger trout.
- **Arctic Grayling – 0**
- **Mountain Whitefish – 5 in total.**
- **Walleye and Sauger in combination – 3 in total.**
- **Walleye – 3** or no more than 12 when harvested under the authority of Special Fish Harvest Licences when combined with any other licences.
- **Northern Pike – 3 in total.**
- **Yellow Perch – 15 in total.**
- **Lake Whitefish and Cisco (Tullibee) – 10 in combined total.**
- **Goldeye and Mooneye – 10 in combined total.**
- **Burbot (Ling) – 10 in total.**
- **Lake Sturgeon – 0**
- **Non-game fish** – Includes sucker species. There is no limit on the number of non-game fish.

**NOTE: Limits and size restrictions at specific lakes and streams are listed in regulation tables for each Watershed Unit starting on page 30.**

## Sportfishing Seasons

Check for dates of open and closed seasons under each Watershed Unit of the Fish Management Zones starting on Page 30.

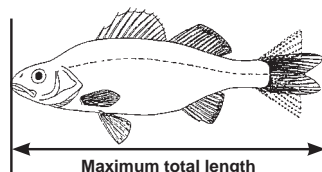
## Tributaries and Beaver Ponds

- Tributaries to a lake have the same regulations as the outlet stream from the lake, unless stated differently in site-specific regulations.
- Stream regulations do not apply to a lake or reservoir unless stated differently in site-specific regulations.
- The same regulations apply to beaver ponds as apply to the streams in which the ponds are found.
- **Ice fishing: Angling is not permitted through the ice; a) into beaver ponds or b) into flowing waters in ES1 to ES4 management zones except the portion of the Lobstick River lying in 53, 54-9, 10-W5.**

## Measuring Fish Length

**Maximum Total Length** – the maximum total length of a fish is measured from the tip of the nose or jaw to the tip of the tail or caudal fin with the tail pinched.

**NOTE:** Anglers should only measure fish to determine if



the fish is of legal-size. It is best to immediately release fish that are close to legal length rather than subjecting the fish to extra handling time. The length of the fish is measured without including the curvature of the body. Lay the fish on a flat surface on top of the measuring device. If you lay the measuring device overtop of the curvature of the body, you will get an inaccurate measurement. It's a good idea to have a fish measuring board.

## Never Cull Fish

“Culling” is staying within the catch limit for a species by releasing fish from a stringer, live well or other holding device when another more desirable (for example, larger) fish is caught. Fish that have been held on a stringer, live well or other holding device usually die if released because of stress and damage to their gills, fins and scales. Culling is unlawful if the practice occurs beyond a person's legal possession limit.

## Tips on Releasing Fish

If a fish is handled carefully and gently, it will have an excellent chance of survival. The most important factors related to post-release mortality rates are warm water, depth of water, air exposure, and swallowed hooks penetrating gills, throat and stomach regions. Fish hooked on the outside of the mouth or in the lip have a better chance of survival. Fishing during cooler times of the day, in shallower water, releasing fish quickly, and using methods that result in being hooked around the mouth are the best ways to reduce post-release hooking mortality. Still fishing with bait or slowly drifting flies will result in more deeply hooked fish. Keeping tight lines and setting the hook immediately after the strike may reduce the occurrence of deeply hooked fish. Walleye and Yellow Perch have a reduced chance of survival if they are caught from deep water (>6 m or 20 feet).

- Retrieve your catch quickly.
- Release fish immediately (with care).
- Avoid squeezing the fish.
- Keep your fingers out of the gills and eyes.
- Keep the fish in the water.
- Remove the hook carefully.
- Leave deeply swallowed hooks in the fish (Side-cutters can be used to cut the hook instead of the line).
- Help revive the fish by holding it in the water.
- Do not fizz – it reduces survival of released fish.
- Fish for walleye and perch in relatively shallow water.

For more information, search for fish handling on mywildalberta.ca.

## Fishing with Bait

**Bait** includes, but is not restricted to: corn, cheese, marshmallows, meat, maggots, meal worms, earthworms, wax worms, gammarus shrimp, leeches, terrestrial insects, the larvae, pupae or adults of aquatic insects (e.g., stonefly, mayfly, caddis fly), bait fish, parts of fish, fish eggs, scented baits, power baits and all additives that scent or flavour artificial baits and lures.

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**Bait Ban** means only unscented lures may be used. In specific streams, only maggots may be used as bait during certain times of the year to allow anglers to fish for mountain whitefish with less impact on trout populations. In specific lakes, only maggots and mealworms may be used as bait to allow anglers to fish for perch and lake whitefish with less impact on pike populations.

A **Lure** is a spoon, plug, jig, fly or other such device made only of feathers, fibre, rubber, wood, metal, plastic or similar materials, and that does not attract fish by scent or flavour.

**Bait Fish** may be used in waters that do not have bait bans or bait fish restrictions. Where fishing with bait fish is not allowed other baits including smelts, herring, gammarus shrimp and dead fish eggs (e.g., preserved "salmon eggs") may be used.

**Bait Fish** means any of the following: suckers (family Catostomidae), sticklebacks (family Gasterosteidae), trout-perch (*Percopsis omiscomaycus*), Iowa darter (*Etheostoma exile*), minnows (family Cyprinidae), and the exceptions are that NO carp, goldfish and the western silvery minnow can be used as bait.

No person shall angle using any fish as bait, other than dead bait fish listed above, dead smelt, dead herring, dead shrimp, dead fish eggs or the skin, fins or eyes of game fish caught by angling.

**Note:** Smelts and herring are of the saltwater families Osmeridae and Clupeidae. Cisco also called tullibee or lake herring are of the family Coregonidae and use of the whole fish as bait is prohibited. As Cisco are classified as a game fish the skin, fins, or eyes of cisco legally caught by angling may be used as bait similar to other game fish. Fish (other than dead smelts, herring, gammarus shrimp and fish eggs) or crayfish purchased from pet stores cannot be used as bait.

**Parts of Game Fish:** Only the skin, fins, eyes and dead eggs of game fish may be used as bait, provided these fish were lawfully caught by angling. Skin, fins, eyes and dead eggs of game fish may be used where the use of bait fish is prohibited, but cannot be used where bait bans are in effect. All game fish kept must be counted in the daily catch limit, including any fish from which parts are used for bait.

## Collecting Bait Fish

Catching bait fish (such as suckers) by angling, bowfishing or spearfishing is allowed from all waters open to fishing with these methods, even at waters where the collection of bait fish by other means is prohibited.

Anglers may collect their own bait fish by minnow trap, dip net and seine net, but these fish must not be sold or released live to waters other than waters from which they were taken. The commercial collection of bait fish requires a Commercial Bait Fishing Licence. The following regulations apply to the collection of bait fish for personal use as bait:

- **The collection of bait fish is not permitted in waters having a bait ban or restriction on the use of bait fish, and in some other specified waters** (see Fish Management Zone regulations Pages 30 to 88).
- The possession of live bait fish is prohibited. All bait fish kept must be killed immediately. Please do not kill more than needed because bait fish are important food for many sport fish.
- Fish other than bait fish must be immediately released unharmed; game fish such as yellow perch must not be kept.

- Seine net means a net the ends of which are brought together or hauled ashore. Examples include beach seine or a throwing net.
- Seine nets may not be larger than 3 m in length and 2 m in depth.
- Minnow traps may not have dimensions greater than 60 cm in length by 30 cm in width, depth or diameter.
- No more than 2 minnow traps may be used at one time.
- Minnow traps must be labeled with the operator's name, address and sportfishing licence number.
- **Crayfish cannot be used as bait. It is unlawful to possess live crayfish.**

## REMEMBER

- It is illegal to use live bait fish or crayfish (live or dead) as bait.
- It is illegal to set out or use bait to attract fish unless the bait is attached to a hook used in angling.
- It is illegal to use scented lures or scented weights where bait bans are in effect.
- Discard live unused bait in its original packaging in a garbage receptacle.

## Crayfish

When fishing for crayfish with a rod and reel (angling) a sportfishing licence is required and sportfishing regulations apply (for example no angling for crayfish when waters are closed to angling).

When fishing for crayfish using a dip net, seine net, trap or by hand, a sportfishing licence is not required and is permitted at any time of year.

The retention and transport of live crayfish is illegal. All retained crayfish must be immediately killed.

## Hooking Mortality

Restrictions on the use of bait are required to increase the survival of released fish. Anglers are generally encouraged to fish with unbaited lures because fish may be hooked in the lip or mouth more often. Hooking mortality is generally higher for fish caught on baited hooks as they tend to take the baited hook deeper into the gills and stomach area and they take longer to release.



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## Releasing Fish

You must immediately release every fish that cannot be legally kept because of species, catch limit, size limit or other regulation, without exception, even if the fish is injured or dead. When the fish is alive, you must release it in a manner that causes the least harm to the fish. Examples of fish that must be released:

- A species for which the limit is 0.
- A fish smaller than the minimum-size limit.
- A fish larger than the maximum-size limit.
- A fish the size of which is protected by a slot-size limit.
- A fish caught after you have already kept your limit.

## Use Caution on Ice

The following guidelines do not override your obligation to use caution and common sense when travelling on ice:

- Careful measurement of ice thickness is important – always test ice conditions. Never walk on ice that is less than 10 cm (4 in.) thick and do not drive on ice that is less than 30 cm (12 in.) thick.
- Beware of ice near the inlets or outlets of streams. Always be extra cautious of ice on rivers and streams. Ice can vary in thickness and in strength from area to area because of temperature, water current, springs, snow cover and time of year.
- Do not drive fast, or follow closely behind or park near another vehicle on the ice.
- Ask someone who knows the area about ice conditions and places to avoid.
- Use caution and stay away from aeration sites. Anglers are encouraged not to fish near aerators for their safety and to prevent fishing lines from tangling in the units and damaging them.

### REMEMBER

- **ALL ICE FISHING SHELTERS THAT ARE ON THE ICE FOR MORE THAN 24 HOURS MUST BE LABELLED ON THE OUTSIDE WITH 2.5 cm BLOCK LETTERS OR LARGER WITH WiN NUMBER OR NAME AND PHONE NUMBER.**
- **ICE FISHING SHELTERS MUST BE REMOVED FROM THE ICE BY MARCH 15 IN PP1 AND MARCH 31 EVERYWHERE ELSE.**
- **ANGLING IS NOT PERMITTED THROUGH THE ICE; A) INTO BEAVER PONDS OR B) INTO FLOWING WATERS IN ES1 TO ES4 MANAGEMENT ZONES EXCEPT THE PORTION OF THE LOBSTICK RIVER LYING IN 53, 54-9, 10-W5.**

## Fish Consumption Advisory

Sportfishing is an important part of Canadian culture and can be a fun and healthy outdoor experience for people of all ages. Fish is an excellent source of lean protein, and provides essential nutrients like omega-3 fatty acids, zinc, iron, selenium and vitamins A, C and D. Despite the health benefits that are associated with eating fish, in some locations in Alberta, various species of fish may be exposed to mercury and other contaminants that when consumed in high levels can impact human health.

Methylmercury is the most toxic form of mercury. It is formed through natural biological processes in the water and sediment from other forms of mercury that are found in the environment. Contaminants accumulate in fat tissues and are persistent in fish, particularly in large predatory fish.

The Government of Alberta has been issuing and reviewing fish consumption advisories for fish caught from local waterbodies in Alberta since the 1990s. The Chief Medical Officer of Health in Alberta

Health and Wellness is responsible for issuing food consumption advisories. Fish consumption advisories apply to local subsistence consumers, recreational anglers and residents who eat fish caught from these waterbodies. These advisories inform the public about any potential health hazards they may encounter when eating specific types of fish. The advisory helps local fish consumers make informed decisions about what is a safe amount of fish to eat. Search “Fish Consumption Advisory” on mywildalberta.ca for more information, or download the “Should I eat this fish” App to your cell phone.

## Cleaning and Transporting Fish

### Fish caught in Alberta:

- Fish cleaned for storage at other than your permanent residence, or for transport to your permanent residence must not be skinned, cut or packed in a manner that the species cannot be identified, the number of fish cannot be determined, and the total length of every fish subject to a size limit cannot be determined.
- Two pieces of fish that are of the same species are considered to be one fish.

### Tips:

- Carry a cooler and ice for storing whole fish for transport to your permanent residence.
- Leave the head, tail and skin attached to fish subject to size limits for accurate length measurements. Internal organs and gills can be removed to preserve quality.
- Fish that are not subject to size limits may be filleted, but enough skin must be left on each fillet for species identification purposes.
- Never transport fish in a solid frozen block.

### REMEMBER

When cleaning fish away from your permanent residence, DO NOT REMOVE evidence of species and, if size limits apply, evidence of length as described above, unless the fish are to be consumed immediately.

### Fish caught by someone else:

If you are transporting fish caught by someone else, you must have a bill of lading signed by the angler who harvested the fish. This letter must provide the following information:

- The sportfishing licence number, name and signature of the individual who harvested the fish,
- The number and species of the fish,
- The location from which you started and the location to which you are traveling, and
- The date on which the fish are being transported.

### Fish caught outside of Alberta:

When traveling within Alberta and transporting fish that were taken elsewhere, you must be able to support your claim that those fish were caught outside of Alberta.

## Gill Nets

Anglers should be aware that while angling you may encounter gill nets in some Alberta lakes.

Gill nets can be lawfully set by licenced users (e.g. First Nations people, Métis harvesters and researchers). All nets must be visibly marked at each end with a one (1) metre stake or spar buoy bearing the applicable licence number. Anglers should respect these nets and keep a safe distance to prevent entanglement with the boat or angling gear.

*Gill Nets continued on next page.*

# Regulations and Information

If the nets are not marked, or the presence of a net seems suspicious, please call your local Fish and Wildlife Office (see Page 27) or the Report A Poacher line at 1-800-642-3800.

## Buying and Selling Fish

The illegal trafficking of fish threatens our fish populations and is a serious offence. Report illegal activities (see Report A Poacher on Page 10).

**Unless authorized by licence; fish caught by any means cannot be sold, bought, traded or bartered.**

## Spearfishing / Bowfishing

A special licence for spearfishing or bowfishing is not required. Spearfishing and bowfishing is allowed under the Alberta Sportfishing Licence.

- Only spears propelled by spring, elastic, compressed gas or muscular power are permitted.
- Only persons who are swimming may spearfish.
- Spears or bows cannot be used to harvest trout, mountain whitefish, Arctic grayling, lake sturgeon, walleye or northern pike.
- Spearfishing or bowfishing are not permitted in Gods, May, Seibert, Winefred, Andrew, Gardiner and Namur lakes.

## Sportfishing in Provincial and National Parks

Alberta Sportfishing Regulations apply in Alberta Provincial Parks but not in Canada's National Parks. Separate regulations apply to those waters or the portion of waters within National Parks. To fish in a National Park, you need a National Park Fishing Permit which is valid only within the National Park. National Park fishing permits are available at most park facilities and some commercial outlets. General Inquiries for Parks Canada National office call 1-888-773-8888.

Fishing in a Wilderness Area or Ecological Reserve is prohibited by the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act.

## Sportfishing in Cold Lake

Sportfishing in Cold Lake requires either an Alberta Sportfishing Licence (see licence exemptions under "Requirements"), or a Saskatchewan Angling Licence. The Alberta Fishery Regulations, 1998 apply to the Alberta portion of Cold Lake; while the Saskatchewan Regulations apply to the Saskatchewan portion of Cold Lake (Saskatchewan regulations are consistent with Alberta regulations for Cold Lake).



## Competitive Fishing Events

**Go to MyWildAlberta website** and search for Competitive Fishing Events for more information or contact your nearest Fish and Wildlife Office and speak to a fisheries biologist (see Page 27).

## Be Bear Smart While Fishing

Bear encounters can happen any time, anglers should be extra alert.

Streams, rivers and lakeshores make convenient travel corridors for wildlife, and the sound of moving water can mask the noise that normally warns animals of your approach.

To learn more about Alberta bears and how to be BearSmart, visit [www.bearsmart.alberta.ca](http://www.bearsmart.alberta.ca).

## Gaff and Gaff Hooks

Gaff or a gaff hook are illegal to possess while angling in Alberta.

## Access to Fishing Waters

Anglers are reminded that healthy fish populations, and our ability to access fishing areas, are contingent upon courtesy and responsible conduct on the lands around them. It is the angler's responsibility to know, understand, and abide by access conditions that apply when using and enjoying Alberta's lands.

Permission is always required before entering or crossing:

- Private land (from landowner)
- Indian reserves (from appropriate band council)
- Métis settlements (from appropriate Métis settlement association)
- Public land under agricultural or grazing lease (from leaseholder)

The website (<https://www.alberta.ca/public-land-recreation>) provides links to information for recreation on public land along with contact information. You can also call toll free 1-833-310-5869 or email [EPA.Outreach-Services@gov.ab.ca](mailto:EPA.Outreach-Services@gov.ab.ca) for more information. While recreational 'foot' access is generally acceptable on public land, anglers should be aware that:

- Fishing in the critical habitats offered by Alberta's Wilderness and Ecological Areas is prohibited under the Wilderness, Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act.
- Off-highway vehicle (OHV) access is prohibited in most provincial parks and provincial recreation areas.
- Off-highway vehicle access may be limited or prohibited within counties, municipal districts or within special public land management areas such as Public Land Use Zones (PLUZ).
- Special conditions, such as extreme fire hazard, may warrant additional temporary access conditions.

## Access to Crown Agricultural Lease Land

If you are looking to recreate on an agricultural lease you must contact the leaseholder to discuss access prior to entering a lease. Leaseholders have a duty to allow reasonable recreational access to the land, as outlined in the Recreational Access regulation. As a steward, the leaseholder is held accountable for the land, including any damage caused by recreational activities so the leaseholder has the ability to deny access for certain activities. Grazing Allotments in the Rocky Mountain Forest Reserve, such as those found in the forested area of the foothills along the Eastern Slopes, are not affected by this legislation. Leaseholder's contact information can be found on the Recreational Access Mapping Tool ([geospatial.alberta.ca/RecAccess](http://geospatial.alberta.ca/RecAccess)).