

FROM THE VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT



Vermont 2020

Fishing Guide

& Regulations



Baitfish Updates “What’s New”

Off-Road Brook Trout

Special Lake Champlain Section

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Quick Reference Guide

For complete fishing regulations, see page 24.

Kurt Budliger

VERMONT FISHING SEASONS

Note: The season dates listed below are for some of Vermont's general fishing seasons. They apply to most Vermont waters, but not all. Prior to fishing, please reference pages 59–90 for special season and regulation information for specific waters, including seasonally closed waters.

Harvest Seasons

Trout and Landlocked Salmon	Second Saturday in April to last day of October
Trout and Landlocked Salmon (Lake Champlain)	No Closed Season
Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass	Second Saturday in June to last day of November
Pickereel, Northern Pike, Yellow Perch, and Smelt	No Closed Season
Walleye (all waters except Chittenden Reservoir and the Connecticut River)	First Saturday in May to March 15, 2021
Chittenden Reservoir	First Saturday in June to March 15, 2021
Connecticut River	See Table 10 (page 90)

Catch and Release (see pages 59–90 for exceptions, including closed waters)

Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass	Year-round, open-water fishing
Trout	Year-round, open-water fishing

Free Fishing Days

Summer Free Fishing Day	Second Saturday in June
Winter Free Fishing Day	Last Saturday in January

VERMONT FISHING LICENSES

Resident

Fishing (ages 18–65)	\$28.00
Youth Fishing (ages 15–17; under age 15, no license needed)	\$8.00
Permanent Licenses (residents only, age 66 or older)	\$60.00
Five-Year Fishing License	\$134.00
Three-Day Fishing ⁽¹⁾	\$11.00
Combination Fishing and Hunting	\$47.00
Five-Year Combination License	\$229.00
Youth Combination Fishing and Hunting (age 17 or under)	\$12.00

Nonresident

Fishing	\$54.00
Youth Fishing (ages 15–17; under age 15, no license needed)	\$15.00
Five-Year Fishing License	\$264.00
One-Day Fishing ⁽¹⁾	\$21.00
Three-Day Fishing ⁽¹⁾	\$23.00
Seven-Day Fishing ⁽¹⁾	\$31.00
Combination Fishing and Hunting	\$143.00
Five-Year Combination License	\$709.00
Youth Combination Fishing and Hunting (age 17 or under)	\$30.00

⁽¹⁾ Term Licenses: All dates are inclusive and consecutive.

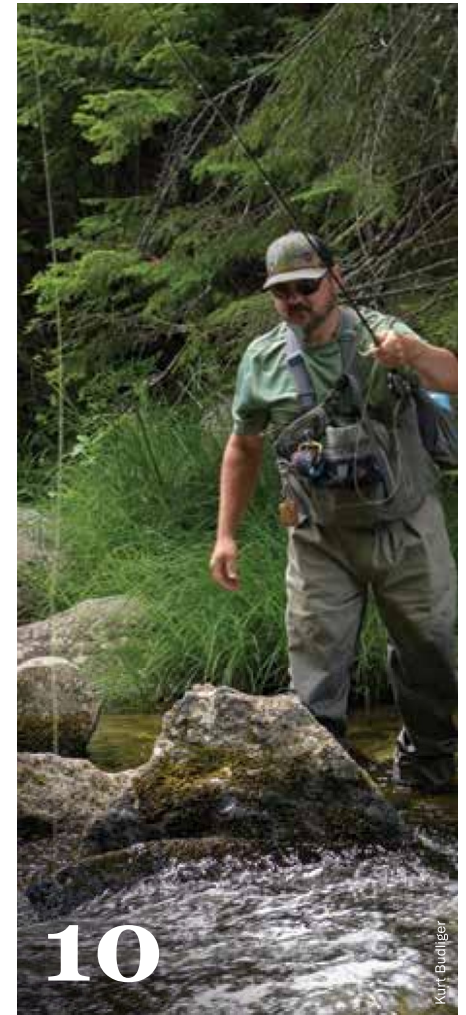
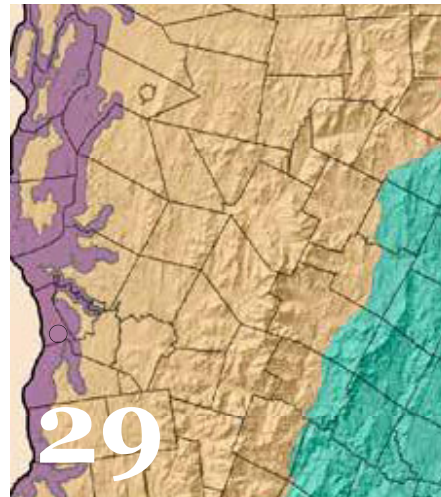
ALL LICENSE FEES LISTED ARE FOR 2020.



Courtesy of Vermont Fish & Wildlife



Courtesy of Lake Champlain Sea Grant



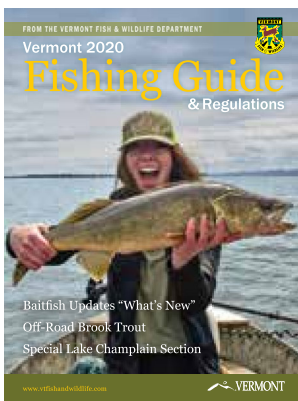
Kurt Budinger

Features

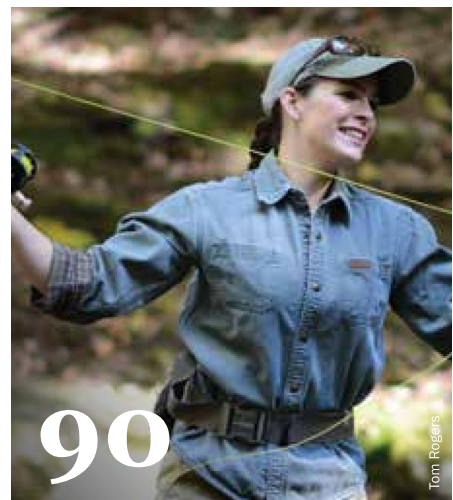
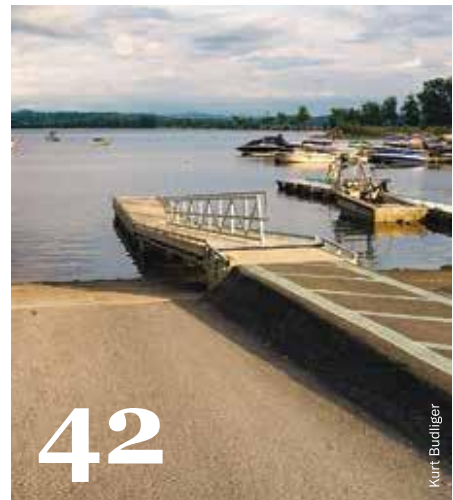
- 5 How to Use this Guide
- 6 Baitfish "What's New"
- 10 Off-Road Brook Trout
- 14 Aquatic Invasive Species Laws
- 29 MAP: Baitfish Zones and Black-list Waters

Reference Information

- 1 **Quick Reference Guide**
Basic fishing season dates and license fees.
- 4 **Commissioner's Letter**
And Vermont's Online Fishing Regulations Tool.
- 18 **License Information**
Types of licenses for both residents and nonresidents, and related rules.
- 21 **General Regulations**
Basic regulations to know before going fishing.
- 24 **General Requirements, Definitions, and Prohibitions**
Understanding regulation terms, what's allowed and what's not.
- 35 **Where the Fish Are**
Handy guide to what species are found in waterbodies across Vermont.
- 38 **Fish Identification: What a Difference a Fin Makes**
Brook or brown trout? Smallmouth or largemouth bass? Find out here.
- 42 **Maps**
Find fishing spots, access areas, public lands, and special fishing regulations.



Cover Photo:
Danielle McAree of Burlington, VT proudly shows off this beauty of a walleye caught on Lake Champlain. During the 2019 fishing season Danielle caught more than five different fish species, all exceeding the minimum qualifying lengths of the Vermont Master Angler Program, earning her the title of Master Angler and bragging rights!



59 **Index of Rivers and Streams**
Sections of rivers and streams with specific regulations, references to maps, and regulation tables.

71 **Index of Lakes and Ponds**
Listing of lakes and ponds with specific regulations, references to maps, and regulation tables.

84 **Fish Regulation Tables**
General fishing regulations for various waterbodies as indicated by the indexes of rivers and streams and lakes and ponds.





88 **Lake Champlain Regulations**
General fishing regulations for Lake Champlain.

90 **Connecticut River Regulations**
General fishing regulations for the Connecticut River.

92 **Fish & Wildlife Department Contact Information**
Who to contact for help or additional information.

94 **Index**

www.vtfishandwildlife.com/fish
Visit us online to learn more about:

-  Fishing Opportunities
-  Boating
-  Fishing Regulations
-  Fishing Events/Programs

Fish & Wildlife Laws

Vermont's fish and wildlife laws help protect, manage, control, and conserve the fish and wildlife of the state. Every individual who hunts, fishes, or traps is responsible for knowing the fish and wildlife laws. This lawbook provides the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department's interpretation of fishing laws. It is formatted to make the laws easier to read and understand. For a complete wording of Vermont's fish and wildlife statutes and regulations, consult *Vermont Statutes Annotated, Part 4, Title 10*, available at town clerks' offices and on the internet at <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/title/10>. Any questions you have regarding these laws should be directed to your local game warden.



A Special Message From the Commissioner

Long-time Vermonters know that many of the best fishing holes are not next to the road, but require forethought and the willingness to step off the beaten path. In this year's Fishing Guide & Regulations, one of our great biologists encourages anglers to indulge in some trout fishing accessed by foot.

This year also marks a major change in baitfish regulation. For years, anglers have been asking the

department to re-examine the baitfish regulation put in place after a dangerous fish disease, VHS, was discovered in the Great Lakes. The regulation was designed to protect fish populations, but it made fishing with bait cumbersome.

More recent analysis by our biologists led to enacting a new regulation to establish

a better balance between protecting fisheries resources and providing angler opportunity. These changes include creating two baitfish zones, east and west, allowing for more transport of baitfish, except from a list of black-listed waters which are at high risk for disease or invasive species. See the article on page 6 and the regulation on pages 25–29 for more information.

This year is a great chance to get off the pavement to find new fishing holes, and it offers more opportunity to use baitfish. I hope you will find time to pick up your rod and get out there to explore Vermont's waters.

Louis Porter, Commissioner, Vermont Fish & Wildlife

INTERACTIVE,
INSTANTANEOUS

Vermont's Online Fishing Regulations Tool

Our Online Fishing Regulations Tool uses technology to make accessing regulation information quick and simple, whether you're at home planning your next Vermont fishing trip or out on the water!

Features of the Fishing Regulations Tool

Interactive Map

System: Allows users to select any waterbody in the state and have instantaneous access to fishing regulations specific to that body of water.

Current Location

Feature: The map works in coordination with the Global Positioning System (GPS) in many mobile devices, allowing users to view fisheries regulations for their current location.

Lookup Tables: Allows users to view regulations by selecting a waterbody, town, or county from a comprehensive lookup list.

Regardless of the pathway, the final result is a simple and clear list of fisheries regulations for all of Vermont's great fishing spots!

Visit www.vtfishandwildlife.com to use the tool!



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Step by Step

If you're new to fishing in Vermont or just checking out the latest regulations, follow these steps to make using this guide quicker and easier.

Step 1 Do you know where you're going to fish?

Yes

NO



Step 2

Go to the main **Map Guide** on page 43.

Locate the general area of the state where you want to fish (from Maps 1 to 15).

Step 3

Go to the individual **Maps 1 to 15** on pages 44 to 58 and determine the waterbody on which you want to fish.

The Maps will also help you identify important points of interest such as access points, boat ramps, and boundaries. It will also show stream section numbers (blue) and lakes (tan) that point to specific regulations in the Indexes. Almost all the stream section numbers and related regulations are in alphabetical order in the Indexes if not noted in the footer.

Step 4

Go to the alphabetical **Index of Rivers and Streams** on pages 59 to 70 or the **Index of Lakes and Ponds** on pages 71 to 83.

If you only know the waterbody by name (for example, Dog River) but not which towns the waterbody is in, this will point you to the right Map and you'll be able to identify the town.

Step 5

Identify any special regulations for that waterbody, including those for specific stream sections or lakes, in the **Index**. Special regulations override general regulations and must be followed.

The Index lists the correct Open Water and Ice Fishing Regulations Tables for that waterbody.

Step 6

Go to the **Table** for the waterbody you are planning to fish on pages 84 to 90.

Note length rules, legal methods, daily limits, and open seasons. These include:

If your waterbody — a river or stream — does not appear in a specific Index, go to page 84 **Table 1: General Regulations for Rivers and Streams** as this covers all the others except the Connecticut River.

If your waterbody — a pond or lake — does not appear in a specific Index, go to page 85, **Table 2: General Regulations for Lakes and Ponds** as this covers all the others except Lake Champlain.

You can also visit the department website, www.vtfishandwildlife.com, for the Online Fishing Regulations Tool or call for more information, 802-828-1000.

Baitfish

“What’s New”



Courtesy of Vermont Fish & Wildlife

By Adam Miller

Vermont Fish & Wildlife

Vermont Fish & Wildlife has changed the way baitfish use is regulated to attain a better balance between protecting Vermont's fisheries resources and providing recreational angling opportunities. Effective January 1, 2020, new baitfish regulations will provide more opportunity to Vermont anglers while also protecting the health of Vermont's fish populations.

Why are baitfish regulations important?

Activities associated with the movement and use of baitfish are known to spread dangerous fish diseases and aquatic invasive species that can cause large scale fish die-off's or alter our native aquatic food webs. This can negatively affect the state's fisheries and impact Vermont's fishing economy and public welfare. By carefully managing the movement of baitfish through regulations, anglers can slow the spread of fish disease and invasive species, thus preserving quality fishing opportunities for current and future generations of anglers.

What's changed?

New regulations now allow for the movement of baitfish from one waterbody to another through a zone system. This is meant to provide more flexibility to anglers who might want to harvest baitfish in one waterbody and use it in another. In short, the new baitfish regulations do the following:

- ▶ Establish an east and a west baitfish zone within which baitfish can be used (not between). To see more about the east/west boundaries, see the Map Guide on page 29.
- ▶ Establish a list of black-list waters that have high fish disease or invasive species risk. Baitfish can be used on these waters but may not be used on other waters. Also see, Black-list Waters on pages 27–28.
- ▶ Extend the time that baitfish transportation receipts are valid from 4 days to 10 days.
- ▶ Establish new baitfish holding rules that account for baitfish zones and black-list waters.
- ▶ Allow commercial baitshops to harvest approved wild baitfish species from a baitfish zone (i.e rainbow smelt, white sucker, etc.) and sell them to anglers for use in that same baitfish zone. Also see, Commercial Bait Dealers on page 28.
- ▶ Allow anglers to harvest and move approved wild baitfish species from waterbodies through a wild baitfish endorsement that can be added at no cost to an angler's fishing/combo license.



The movement and use of baitfish are known to spread dangerous diseases that can cause fish die-offs.

I buy my baitfish to go fishing, what's changed for me?

Under the previous baitfish regulations, commercially purchased baitfish were only valid for the specific waterbody recorded on the baitfish transportation receipt. New baitfish regulations allow for the following:

- ▶ Purchased baitfish may only be used in the baitfish zone or black-list water recorded on the baitfish transportation receipt (valid for 10 days from the time and date of sale).
- ▶ A person may transport unused commercially purchased baitfish away from a waterbody and use it within 10 days in the same baitfish zone or black-list water as indicated on the receipt:

Zoned baitfish receipt (East Zone/West Zone)

- ↳ Can be used on multiple non-black-list waters in the same zone.
- ↳ Can be used on a black-list water in that zone, but once on that water it cannot be taken off the water.
- ↳ Cannot be used in a different baitfish zone other than what's on the receipt.


Black-list water baitfish receipt

- ↳ Can be used back and forth ONLY on that black-list water (Exception: commercially purchased rainbow smelt cannot be transported off the specific black-list water once they are brought onto it).

- ▶ A person transporting unused commercially purchased baitfish away from a waterbody to use later may store them in any non-black-list water within the baitfish zone listed on the baitfish transportation receipt as long as:
 - ↳ The baitfish did not come in contact with a black-list water, and
 - ↳ The baitfish cannot be stored in waters where baitfish use is prohibited.
- ▶ A person transporting unused commercially purchased baitfish away from a waterbody to use later may not store them in waters of a different baitfish zone. These baitfish must be kept in a closed container isolated from any flow of lake, pond, or stream water.

Want to learn more about using baitfish?

These changes to Vermont's baitfish regulations are meant to provide more angling opportunity to the public while still promoting healthy fish populations. Vermont Fish & Wildlife continues to work hard to ensure all anglers have the chance to make lifelong fishing memories with friends and family. Fishing in Vermont is getting better each year, so make sure you get out and enjoy all that Vermont fishing has to offer! ■

 If you'd like to learn more about the baitfish regulations visit: vtfishandwildlife.com/using-baitfish-in-vermont



Courtesy of Vermont Fish & Wildlife

The new baitfish regulations provide more flexibility to anglers while still protecting the state's fisheries by allowing the movement of baitfish from one waterbody to another through a zone system.

Personal Harvest of Wild Baitfish



Creek Chub



Blacknose Dace



Northern Redbelly Dace



Common Shiner

© Joseph Tomiellen

I want to harvest and use my own wild caught baitfish. What do I need to know?

Under the previous baitfish regulations, anglers were not able to harvest and use their own wild caught baitfish anywhere other than where it was caught. Under the new baitfish rules, any person who wants to use, sell, or transport personally harvested wild baitfish beyond the waterbody in which they were harvested must have a wild baitfish endorsement on their fishing/combination license. To obtain this endorsement, anglers must successfully complete a wild baitfish certification course. The course instructs anglers wanting to use wild harvested baitfish not only the legal requirements of personally harvesting baitfish but also the risks associated with moving baitfish and the potential to spread fish diseases and aquatic invasive species.

Why do I need a wild baitfish endorsement?

The wild baitfish endorsement course educates anglers on risks associated with the movement and use of baitfish. Moving wild caught baitfish increases the risk of spreading fish diseases and aquatic invasive species that can cause large scale fish die-offs or alter our native food web. This can negatively affect the state's fisheries and impact Vermont's fishing economy and public welfare. When an angler catches and transports personally harvested wild baitfish to another waterbody, they must accept increased personal responsibility in slowing the spread of fish disease and aquatic invasive species by taking proper precautions. The

wild baitfish endorsement is a means of educating anglers who want to catch and use personally harvested baitfish on the potential risks of moving baitfish to reduce the risk of spreading aquatic invasive species and fish diseases.

How do I get a wild baitfish endorsement?

In short here's what you need to do to get a wild baitfish endorsement so you can catch and use your own wild baitfish.

- Go to www.vtfishandwildlife.com/wild-baitfish to review the wild baitfish certification course materials and learn the rules and regulations regarding harvesting and moving personally harvested wild baitfish.
- Successfully complete the wild baitfish certification quiz to be eligible to receive a wild baitfish endorsement.
- Once you've successfully completed the certification, go online to www.vtfishandwildlife.com to update your fishing or combination license to include your wild baitfish endorsement. This endorsement is a free add-on that you must have on your license.
- You're now ready to personally harvest and use wild baitfish! Be sure to have your fishing or combination license with your wild baitfish endorsement with you while you harvest, transport, or use personally harvested wild caught baitfish and be sure to follow all other pertinent baitfish rules.



To learn more about rules associated with catching and using your own wild baitfish and the endorsement course, please go to: www.vtfishandwildlife.com/wild-baitfish.

Off-Road

Brook Trout



Kurt Budiger

By Jud Kratzer

Fisheries Biologist
Vermont Fish & Wildlife

Each fish species has a unique combination of features that endear them to certain subsets of the angling community. Some species are favored because of their large size. Some are beloved because of the challenging sport they provide in coaxing them to strike or landing

them once they do. Others are prized less for their performance in the water and more for their performance on the table. Still others hold a special place because of aesthetics, beauty both in the fish themselves and the places they're found. Such is the case with brook trout.



The author fishing a northeastern Vermont brook trout stream.

While brook trout are easily accessible throughout much of Vermont, some of the best and most fulfilling brook trout fishing can be had well off the beaten path. Road-side streams see more fishing effort simply because many anglers lack the initiative to walk more than a few steps away from their car or truck. While these road-side streams never get “fished out” completely, anglers selectively harvest the larger fish leaving behind smaller, educated fish that may have been hooked and released a few times. For these reasons, some of the best brook trout fishing, not to mention better scenery, might be just a few thousand steps away. Here are some basic clues to find hidden brook trout stream gems.

Cold Water, Deep Pools, Plenty of Cover

The single most important defining characteristic of brook trout biology is their need for cold water. If you find a Vermont stream with cold water, you are likely to find brook trout. How cold? A few years ago, the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department performed a study to determine what factors were the most important predictors of brook trout abundance in northeastern Vermont. Biologists found that the best brook trout streams rarely exceeded 68°F, even in the summer.

They also found that brook trout tended to be more abundant in streams with deeper water and large amounts of woody material. Woody material, in the form of logs and branches contributed from the surrounding forest, provides hiding places for brook trout and can also increase depth by creating small impoundments upstream and plunge pools downstream.

Use a Map to Locate Hillside Streams and Public Access

Finding cold water is one of the most important considerations when planning a wilderness brook trout trip. Look for streams flowing off wooded hillsides. If the stream is small enough that the surrounding forest provides shade for most of the day, there is a good chance that it will be cold enough to support a fishable population of brook trout. One exception is pond outlet streams, which usually consist mostly of warm waters skimmed from the pond's surface. If in doubt, take the stream's temperature during a hot summer day. If it is less than about 68°F, it is cold enough for brook trout. A good map and a look at something like Google Earth can help with assessing the amount of forest cover along the stream and whether there are any ponds that might warm the water.

A map can also be helpful for determining land ownership, which is another important consideration when planning a wilderness fishing trip. Fortunately, Vermont offers several thousand acres of forested lands that are open to public access including state wildlife management areas, state forests, national forests, federal refuges, and private timber company lands with public access easements. A call to a local fisheries biologist might also help to narrow the search for good brook trout streams on publicly accessible lands. Or check the Vermont Fish & Wildlife website, www.vtfishandwildlife.com/wilderness-brook-trout, for maps, fishing tips and more. ■



Joe Norton

This would be considered a very big fish in most small brook trout streams.



Kurt Budliger

The Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department shows students how electrofishing can be used to sample wild brook trout populations.



The diverse and abundant sport fishing opportunities enjoyed each year by anglers across Vermont are a direct result of fisheries management and restoration activities conducted by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. These activities are funded through the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Program — money generated by user purchases of fishing equipment and motor boat fuels. The department's fisheries management and restoration projects help maintain and restore healthy aquatic ecosystems, clean water, and good habitat, benefiting anglers by supporting and providing quality sport and recreational fishing opportunities across Vermont.

HELPFUL TIPS

Why Habitat Really Matters to the Wild Brook Trout

(and why they're so small)



Courtesy of Vermont Fish & Wildlife

There are many waterfalls and cascades that are only enjoyed by the rare few that venture off road in search of wilderness brook trout.

Depth and cover are important for brook trout because of the second most defining characteristic of brook trout biology, namely that it is really hard to be a brook trout.

Because of the brook trout's all-important need for cold water, they are often limited to relatively small, shallow streams. At least, that is the case in much of Vermont. Living in small, shallow streams is difficult for several reasons. Fish in tight quarters are easier targets for predators like mink, otters, herons, and kingfishers. It can be especially easy for predators during summer droughts when brook trout are forced to congregate in the relatively few deep pools or at cold spring seeps. Winter can be even more difficult as brook trout find themselves squeezed into even tighter quarters by ice sheets that can take up most of the water column.

This hard life is why stream-dwelling brook trout tend to be small. They only reach trophy proportions in ponds and larger rivers where they have adequate cold water, depth, and food to allow for multiple year survival and fast growth. In their

more typical small stream habitat, they have a high mortality rate, which means that each fish has a very high likelihood of dying of natural causes each year. In Vermont streams, approximately 90% of brook trout are less than 6 inches long, which roughly corresponds to 2 years of age. This is true even in streams that see little or no fishing effort. They don't have time to grow to large sizes, but they don't need to because they mature early, with some brook trout able to reproduce at age one and nearly all reproducing by age two. They are also prolific spawners, keeping the streams well-stocked with the next generation. The brook trout's high mortality and reproductive rates mean that anglers should feel good about keeping some fish for the table, especially on lightly fished back-country streams. If anglers don't harvest them, predators or Old Man Winter surely will.

HELPFUL TIPS

Aquatic Invasive Species Laws

PROHIBITED SPECIES: The possession of zebra mussels, quagga mussels, rusty crayfish, Asian clam, spiny water flea, fishhook water flea, and all aquatic plants is prohibited.

VESSEL INSPECTIONS: All watercraft operators are required to inspect their own vessels and trailers and remove and dispose of all aquatic plants and aquatic invasive species prior to launching and upon leaving a state water.

DRAINING OF VESSELS: Prior to leaving state waters, all watercraft operators are required to drain their vessels, trailers, and all other equipment of water, including water in live wells, ballast tanks, and bilge areas. When transporting vessels on the road, all drain plugs, bailers, valves, and other devices that are used to control the draining of water must be removed or placed in the open position. Bait buckets, water hauling, and emergency-response vehicles are exempted from this requirement.

MANDATORY BOAT INSPECTIONS: Boat inspections are mandatory whenever a Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) authorized inspection station is present, is open/staffed, and one's vessel is identified as requiring inspection. Refusing to comply with a mandatory inspection and decontamination is considered a violation of state law.

NOTE: the term "vessel" means any type of watercraft that can be used as a means of transportation on water, including boats, canoes, kayaks, paddleboards, personal watercraft, and so on.

Aquatic Invasive Species Identification

It is illegal to possess or transport the following aquatic invasive species found in Vermont:

Rusty Crayfish



Jeff Gunderson, Minnesota Sea Grant

An invasive crayfish species that can displace native crayfish and destroy aquatic habitat. Rusty crayfish can reach 5 inches in length and can be identified by dark reddish spots on either side of their shell and large, strong, smooth claws that can be a brownish-olive color or a reddish-brown color with black or orange tips.

Alewife



North American Native Fishes Association

Asian Clam



GB Nonnative Species Secretariat

Eurasian Watermilfoil



Alison Fox, University of Florida, Bugwood.org

Spiny Water Flea



Jeff Gunderson, Minnesota Sea Grant

Water Chestnut



B. Smorgans

Variable-Leaf Watermilfoil



Dennis Roberge, Courtesy of Maine VLMP

Zebra Mussel



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Note: Transporting any aquatic plant or aquatic plant part, zebra mussel, or quagga mussel on the outside of a vehicle, boat, personal watercraft, trailer, or other equipment is illegal. Violators are subject to a penalty of up to \$1,000.

HELPFUL TIPS

Get a Grip on Your Fish

Are you holding your fish correctly?



Kurt Budjiger

While some anglers prefer to harvest and eat their catch, others opt to practice catch and release. Vermont Fish & Wildlife offers several catch and release-only seasons along with regular fishing seasons to provide a diversity of angling opportunities, and the department has developed a series of tips that provide guidance on landing and safely releasing fish to ensure they will survive to be caught another day.

Vermont Fish & Wildlife views thousands of fish photographs each year showing some of the best fish catches annually from across the state. According to department fisheries biologists, one commonly seen mistake is how fish are held for a photograph before being released.

“Holding a fish horizontally, not vertically, is the best if you must hold a fish up for a photo,” said Shawn Good, fisheries biologist with Vermont Fish & Wildlife. “There’s a lot of pressure on a fish’s internal organs when held out of the water, especially when held vertically. Fish live in a neutrally buoyant environment — the water helps support their internal organs. Holding a big fish vertically could cause internal damage.”

Good pointed out a couple of other key tips for holding fish.

“Using two hands to support the fish horizontally is the best way to lift a fish for a photo,” said Good. “A good way is to place one hand just under or behind the head and the other under the belly or around the narrow part just ahead of the tail.”

Additionally, Good cautions not to squeeze a fish’s side too hard, or bend its jaw down at an extreme angle as often seen when anglers hold bass.

“Also, keep your fingers out of the fish’s gills as they’re very sensitive and can cause the fish to bleed if damaged,” concluded Good.

Catch and Release Tips

ALWAYS BE GENTLE

Remove hooks carefully. Never rip out a hook!

Use the “**hook shake**” technique. Reach into the fish’s mouth and grasp the hook shank with fingers or pliers. Lift the fish and rotate the hook shank down and shake gently, allowing the fish to slide off the hook.

Hooked in the gills, throat, or stomach? Cut the hook off and leave it in. It will rust out of the fish in a short time period.



Consider using barbless hooks and replacing treble hooks.

Single hooks reduce injury and make live release quicker and easier on the fish.



Using live bait?

Watch your line and set the hook as soon as possible to avoid having the fish swallow the bait.



Don't wear out the fish!

Exhausted fish are at higher risk of dying after release. Landing and releasing a fish quickly will improve its recovery.



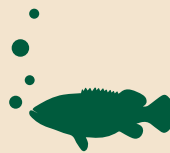
Use the right size net!

Big fish shouldn't be folded into small nets.



Before releasing a tired fish, cradle it in a swimming position.

Move it gently in an “s” pattern to force fresh water through its gills until the fish is able to maintain an upright position on its own.



Keep the fish in the water, if possible.

Limit the fish's contact with other objects to protect its slime coating, which is critical to fish health.



Ice fishing?

Avoid exposing the fish to the freezing air. Unhook in the water.

Vermont Fish & Wildlife offers many catch and release fishing opportunities to anglers, including special seasons and waters that are designated as catch and release only. To learn more, visit www.vtfishandwildlife.com/fish.

Hey! Let Me Go!

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department works to protect and restore rare and endangered fish species. To help us in this effort, we're asking anglers to learn to identify these species and release them immediately if caught while fishing.

Muskellunge (or "muskie")



More than 50,000 muskies have been stocked in the Missisquoi region in an effort to bring this majestic fish species back to Lake Champlain. If these muskies survive and begin reproducing naturally, they will provide an exciting fishing opportunity in Vermont. They are sometimes difficult to distinguish from northern pike or chain pickerel, or the increasingly common pike-pickerel hybrid.

While anglers may legally target muskie statewide with artificial flies and lures, all muskie caught anywhere in Vermont must be released immediately.

Sturgeon



The lake sturgeon is listed as an endangered species in Vermont. Biologists have documented spawning activity in Vermont rivers that were historical sturgeon spawning sites, and they are working to restore sturgeon by improving habitat, restoring stream flow, removing obstructions in rivers, and lessening the impact of sea lamprey predation. Anglers may not target sturgeon and must release them if caught incidentally. Please report the sighting to the department.

Sauger



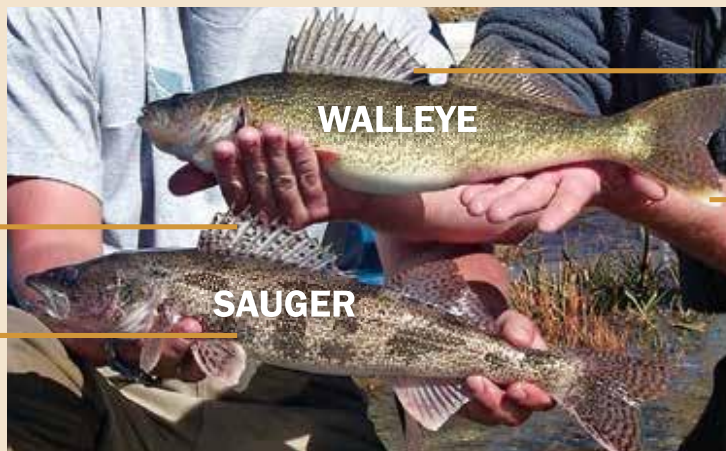
Sauger populations are declining across their range and Vermont is no exception. To help protect this fish, a new regulation prohibits anglers from harvesting sauger. Since walleye and sauger are similar in appearance, anglers should learn how to distinguish between the two. If a sauger is caught incidentally, anglers must release it and should report the sighting to the department.

SAUGER OR WALLEYE?

Please Learn the Difference

Black spots on dorsal fin

Dark, mottled coloration often present on sides



WALLEYE

SAUGER

Black membrane between last two or three spines on dorsal fin.
No dark spots on the membrane of the dorsal fin.

White tip on bottom of tail

License Information



Tom Rogers

Buying Your License

Anyone can apply for a fishing license. There is no requirement to have had a previous fishing license.

Important things to remember:

- Fill in your information as you wish it to appear on your license. Your printed license and a photo ID should be carried whenever you go fishing, hunting, or trapping.
- If you are purchasing a term fishing license (a fishing license for a shorter duration than the whole year), make sure you specify the day you plan to start fishing. Term fishing licenses are for consecutive days.
- If you are purchasing a hunting, combination, archery, or trapping license, you must have held a previous hunting, combination, archery, or trapping license in Vermont, any other state, or Canada, or have passed a state of Vermont-approved safety course. You may complete the license affidavit form certifying that you have held this type of license previously or passed a state of Vermont-approved safety course.

We offer three easy ways to purchase all fishing or combination licenses:

1. Go online to www.vtfishandwildlife.com.

You will need the following:

- **A printer to print your license.** Printing requires Adobe Acrobat Reader on your computer. You can download the free Acrobat Reader software from our website.
- **A credit card.** We accept Visa, Discover, or MasterCard for payment.

Nice to have ready if you have one:

- **Your Conservation Identification Number or CID #.** You can look up your Conservation ID on the website or find it on your previous license.

2. Visit one of our district offices or authorized license agents. A list of license agents is available at www.vtfishandwildlife.com, or you can call us at (802) 828-1190 for an agent closest to you.
3. Print a license application from www.vtfishandwildlife.com, fill out, and send in with your payment.

Licenses Are Required

Any person engaged in fishing, hunting, or taking any wild animals must be properly licensed, except as listed below under exceptions. Wild animals are defined by law as ALL animals, including birds, amphibians, and reptiles, other than domestic animals.

License Possession

Appropriate licenses must be carried while hunting, fishing, trapping, or transporting fish, game, or furbearers. The licenses must be exhibited on demand of a state game warden or other enforcement officer, or the owner of the land on which such person is hunting, fishing, or trapping. See *Title 10 V.S.A. Section 4266*. An electronic or digital copy of the license is acceptable, except for minor children who are hunting with rifle or bow must still carry a paper license signed by their parent.

FREE Fishing Days

The second Saturday in June and the last Saturday in January are Free Fishing Days in Vermont. Residents and nonresidents may fish without a license. All legal fishing methods and limits apply.

My License Covers What?

Fishing licenses cover fishing throughout the year.

Combination licenses include a late-season bear tag and a November-season legal buck tag. They also cover small-game hunting. Add-on licenses are required for early season bear,

archery deer season, muzzleloader deer season, and turkey seasons (each with their own tags).

Resident Status

In order to obtain resident annual licenses, a person must have lived in Vermont for the six months immediately prior to applying for a license and NOT claimed residence elsewhere for any other reason.

An applicant for a resident lifetime license must have been a resident for at least 12 months or must be a dependent of a resident.

A nonresident student who is enrolled in a high school, college, or university within the state is entitled to a resident fishing, hunting, or combination license.

To qualify, the student must have successfully completed two successive semesters at his or her Vermont secondary school, college, or university, must present an admission card, and must pay the resident fee.

Exceptions to License Requirements

A resident owner of land in Vermont, his or her spouse, and minor children may hunt within the boundary of that land and take fish from a private pond within the boundary of that land without a license within season (except if their right to obtain a license is under suspension). A nonresident owner of land has equal privilege if his or her land is NOT posted (except if their right to obtain a license is under suspension). "Posted" means any signage that would lead a reasonable person to believe that hunting is prohibited on the land, except for "Safety Zone" signs. **Children under 15 never need a license to fish.**

Military Personnel

Any resident of Vermont who is serving on active duty in the armed forces of the United States or is performing, or is under orders to perform, a homeland

defense or stateside contingency operation for a period of 120 or more consecutive days may obtain at no cost a hunting or fishing license or combination hunting and fishing license.

A person who obtains a license under this provision may keep the license until it expires, whether or not the person continues to serve in the armed forces.

A nonresident member of the armed forces of the United States who is on active duty and stationed at a military, air or naval post, station or base within Vermont may buy a license to hunt or fish at the resident fee.

Any questions on eligibility for military licenses?

Call (802) 828-1190 or email fwlicensing@vermont.gov.

Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department
Attn: Licensing
1 National Life Drive, Dewey Building
Montpelier, VT 05620-3208

Permanent Licenses

Any Vermont resident who is 66 or older may apply for and purchase a permanent license on our website, at an authorized license agent, at our district offices, or by mail.

If a permanent license holder wishes to hunt for more than one archery deer, he/she must purchase additional archery licenses. If waterfowl hunting, he/she must also purchase state and federal duck stamps and register with H.I.P. each year.

Permanent licenses do not include duck stamps or entries into the moose and antlerless lotteries or permits.

Permanent Disability Licenses

A legally blind person who is a Vermont resident may apply for a free permanent fishing license. Information is available from the Fish & Wildlife office or www.vtfishandwildlife.com.

A Vermont resident who is paraplegic or who is certified by a physician to have permanent severe physical mobility disability may receive a free permanent fishing, hunting, or combination license, if qualified, with the proper proof of disability.

“Paraplegic” is a person with permanent paralysis of the lower half of the body with involvement or loss of both legs. A Statement of Disability form is available from the office or our website.

A Vermont resident who is a veteran of the armed forces of the United States and who is 60 percent disabled due to a service-connected disability may receive a free

fishing or combination license, if qualified, upon presentation of a certificate issued by the Department of Veterans Affairs so certified by *Title 10 V.S.A. Section 4255*.

To see if you qualify for the license, call Licensing at (802) 828-1190. If you meet the requirements, you will need to present a copy of your VA documentation listing your service-connected disability rating. You can obtain a copy of this documentation from benefits.va.gov/benefits. If you qualify for a combination license, you will also receive turkey and muzzleloader deer licenses. If you qualify for an archery license, you will receive one.

Permanent licenses do not include duck stamps or entries into the moose and antlerless lotteries or permits.

Lifetime Licenses

A resident or nonresident lifetime fishing, hunting, or combination fishing and hunting license may be obtained from the Fish & Wildlife Department. Applications are available on our website or from the office. Fees are as follows:

- for children < 1 year old = 8x current adult license price;
- for children 1–15 years old = 16x current adult license price;
- for adults 16–24 years old = 31x current adult license price;
- for adults 25–64 years old = 26x current adult license price.



The Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact (IWVC) ensures that, in participating states, nonresident violators will receive the same treatment as resident violators. IWVC member states reciprocate in the suspension or revocation of licenses and permits resulting from violation of hunting, fishing, or trapping laws.

If an individual's license or permit privileges are revoked in one compact member state, they are subject to suspension or revocation in all other member states. For example, if a Vermont resident has their hunting privileges suspended in Minnesota, their privileges may also be suspended in Vermont and in all other compact states. This helps prevent habitual violators from relocating their illegal activities to other member states.

The IWVC also has established procedures that cause a nonresident violator who fails to comply with the terms of a citation issued in a participating state to face the possibility of the suspension of their wildlife license privileges in their home state until the terms of the citation are met. The goal of the IWVC is to facilitate improved enforcement of hunting, fishing, and trapping laws through the cooperation of law enforcement units in member states.

Lifetime and Permanent License Renewal

If you intend to hunt, fish, or trap this year, you must update by reprinting your lifetime, permanent disability or permanent license regardless of whether or not you used your tags.

This statutory requirement has been put in place to allow the department to collect accurate harvest and licensing information for lifetime licenses. There is no penalty for the failure to renew.

This updated license will include current year tags. You may update your license at no cost online at www.vtfishandwildlife.com. If you are unable to go online, you can call (802) 828-1190 or go to any authorized license agent or Fish & Wildlife office. A license agent may charge you up to \$1.50 for a reprint.

Requirements for Hunting, Combination Hunting and Fishing, Archery, and Trapping Licenses

An applicant for a hunting, combination hunting and fishing, archery, or trapping license must present either

- A previous or current hunting, combination, archery, or trapping license from Vermont or any state or Canadian province; or
- A certificate or a letter of proof showing satisfactory completion of an approved hunter safety, archery, or trapping education course from Vermont or any other state or province; or

- A signed affidavit attesting to having a prior hunting, combination, archery, or trapping license from Vermont or any other state or province.

A person under age 16 must have his or her parent or guardian sign to obtain a hunting license.

NOTE: Federal firearms laws, found at 18 U.S.C. Sect. 922, prohibit certain individuals, including those convicted of felonies or any domestic violence offense, those subject to a final relief from abuse order, and unlawful users of controlled substances, from possessing centerfire and rimfire firearms. For a complete list of prohibitions, contact the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives at (802) 865-4020.

State Border Requirements

A person with a resident Vermont fishing license may take fish anywhere in the Connecticut River, subject to the regulations of Vermont and New Hampshire. Hunting licenses for residents and nonresidents are only valid to the New Hampshire state boundary, which is the low-water mark on the Vermont side of the Connecticut River. For Lake Champlain fishing license information, see Lake Champlain Regulations, page 88.

License Revocation

10 V.S.A. Sect. 4502 – the “Uniform Point System” – provides that hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses will be revoked based on the number of points received when a person is convicted of violating a fish or wildlife law.

Suspensions

- For 10 to 14 points accumulated in five years: one-year suspension.
- For 15 to 19 points accumulated in five years: two-year suspension.
- For 20 points or more accumulated in five years: three-year suspension.
- Conviction of carelessly or negligently wounding a person by gunshot, or manslaughter by the careless and negligent use of firearms, will, by statute, revoke the hunting license privilege or the right to obtain such license for five years.
- It is illegal to hunt, fish, or trap while a license or right to obtain a license is under suspension in Vermont or any other state that is a member of the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact.
- Landowners may not hunt, fish, or trap on their land if their license is suspended.
- Fine: up to \$2,000 and additional suspension period.
- Remedial Course: A person whose license is revoked with 15 or more points accumulated in five years must successfully complete a remedial course designed to teach hunters, trappers, and anglers correct legal and ethical behavior while hunting, trapping, and fishing.
- Suspension Per Family Court Orders: Vermont hunting, fishing, and trapping licenses and permits may be suspended for failure to comply with child support orders of the Family Court. 15 V.S.A. Sect. 798(b).



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General Regulations and Definitions

Tom Rogers

GENERAL REGULATIONS AND DEFINITIONS



“Take” and “Taking”: This means pursuing, shooting, hunting, killing, capturing, trapping, disturbing, harrising, worrying, wounding, snaring, or netting fish, birds, or other animals. It includes placing, setting, drawing, or using any net or other device commonly used to take fish or wild animals, whether they result in taking or not. It includes every attempt to take and every act of assistance to another person in taking or attempting to take fish or wild animals.

Camping and Trespass: It is illegal to park, drive, or camp on another person’s land without permission of the landowner. You must immediately leave the property when the landowner requests it, whether the property is posted or not. Roadside or public highway turnouts are not legal for overnight camping.

Importation of Wildlife: It is illegal to bring live wild mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, or fish into Vermont without previously obtaining an importation permit from the Fish & Wildlife Department.

Interfering With Hunters, Anglers, and Trappers: It is illegal to intentionally interfere with someone who is lawfully taking fish or wild animals, or to disrupt the taking of any fish or wild animal by harassing or disturbing the fish or animal.

Interstate Highways: No one may legally travel on foot within the right-of-way or cross-boundary fences along interstate highways. Rest areas and pullouts are NOT access areas for hunting, fishing, or entering on adjacent lands unless posted as such.

Private Roads and Lands: Vermont law prohibits obstructing private driveways, barways, or gateways with motor vehicles. People shall not drive over private lands or enter these lands for the purpose of camping without the permission of the landowner.

Season Dates: All season dates in this book are inclusive.

Violators: A person who drives, transports, scouts, counsels, or otherwise aids another person in a violation, or who knowingly possesses, consumes, or otherwise shares in the proceeds of such a violation by receiving or possessing fish or wild animals, or any parts thereof, shall be punished as a principal.

Damage to Fish & Wildlife Property: A person who damages or destroys a wildlife facsimile (decoy) owned by the Fish & Wildlife Department shall pay restitution for its replacement or repair. Whoever intentionally or recklessly damages, injures, interferes with, or destroys any property, real or personal, belonging to or controlled by the state for fish, game, or wildlife purposes shall be fined not more than \$2,500 and pay restitution to repair or replace the damaged property.

Reimbursement for Illegally Taken Fish or Wildlife

In addition to any court penalties, anyone convicted of illegally taking, destroying, or possessing wild animals must pay, as restitution, into the fish and wildlife fund no more than the following amounts:

Big Game.....	\$2,000.00
Endangered Threatened Species (T10, 5401).....	\$2,000.00
Small Game	\$500.00
Fish.....	\$25.00

Threatened and Endangered Species

Anyone who takes or injures a Vermont Threatened or Endangered Species is subject to either civil enforcement or criminal prosecution for a big game violation. Criminal penalties include up to 60 days incarceration, a \$500 to \$2,000 fine, a \$2,000 payment to the fish and wildlife fund, and restitution costs. Agency civil enforcement

penalties are capped at \$42,500 for a single violation. The complete list of threatened and endangered species is available on the Fish & Wildlife website (www.vtfishandwildlife.com). The list includes lake sturgeon, channel darter, eastern sand darter, stonecat, timber rattlesnake, bald eagle, spruce grouse, beach heather, great laurel, Canada lynx, marten, little brown bat, and Indiana bat. Federal penalties also may apply.

Posted Property Under Fish & Wildlife Law

Hunting, fishing, or trapping on properly posted land is illegal without **written permission**. This includes land posted for hunting, fishing, or trapping **by permission only**. Properly posted land will have records filed with the town clerk and the Fish & Wildlife Department. See *Title 10, V.S.A., Sections 5201 to 5206*.

Whether the property is posted or not, a hunter or angler shall show their license if requested by the landowner.

It is illegal to damage or remove posters prohibiting hunting, fishing, or trapping.

A person must leave the land immediately on demand of the owner, whether the land is posted or not.

Posting and By Permission Only Signs

A landowner, or a person having the exclusive right to take fish or wild animals on land or the waters thereon may maintain signs stating that hunting, fishing, or trapping, or any combination of the three is **prohibited** or **by permission only**.

See *10 V.S.A. Appendix Sect. 14* for fish stocking requirements to post against fishing.

Permission Only signs shall state the owner’s name and a method by which to contact the owner or a person authorized to provide permission to hunt, fish, or trap on the property.

Posting and Permission Only Signs

- The owner or person posting the land shall annually record the posting at the town clerk's office for a fee of \$5.00.
- Signs must be not less than 8½ inches by 11 inches.
- Lettering and background on the signs must be of contrasting colors.
- Signs must be maintained at all times and dated each year.
- Signs must be erected on or near all boundaries, at each corner, and not over 400 feet apart.
- Signs shall not be considered void if other language is added, as long as a reasonable person would understand that hunting, fishing, or trapping are prohibited.

Safety Zone: A property owner may establish a 500-foot Safety Zone around an occupied dwelling, residence, barn, stable, or other building with signs provided by the Fish & Wildlife Department. These signs shall be placed at each corner of the Safety Zone and no more than 200 feet apart. Shooting is prohibited in the Safety Zone, and no wild animal may be taken within it without permission from the owner.

Sale or Purchase of Fish and Game

Sale and Purchase of Fish: A person shall not buy or sell a salmon, trout, lake trout, walleye, northern pike, muskellunge, black bass, or other fish specified by regulation, taken in this state, or imported from another state or country where sale of such fish is prohibited, except such fish reared in licensed propagation farms within the state. No person shall buy fish for resale without a Fish Buyer Permit issued by the commissioner.

Game Suppers: Game suppers may be held at any time by a church, volunteer fire department, fish and game club, or other nonprofit organization with a permit issued by a state game warden.

Wild animals and fish legally taken in this state, or another state or country, may be transported and sold as part of a game supper authorized by permit. Big game provided by the Fish & Wildlife Department may also be sold at such suppers. Migratory waterfowl, cottontail rabbits, snowshoe hare, and anadromous salmon may not be sold. Permits for game suppers must state the name of the organization holding the supper, as well as the date and location of the supper. A permit needs to be

applied for at least 10 days before the date of the supper. Contact the Law Enforcement Division of the Fish & Wildlife Department for a permit application.

Transportation of Fish or Game

Transportation of fish or game is only permitted in the presence of the person who took that fish or game. A person shall not transport fish or game

- Taken by someone else unless the person who took the fish or game accompanies it;
- During closed season for that fish or game;
- If it exceeds the number or limit of fish or game that may legally be taken in a day.

However, a person traveling on land between a temporary abode, such as a hunting camp, and his or her home may transport in one day the number of fish or game that may legally be taken in two days.

While on the waters of the state, a person may not transport more than one day's limit of fish unless the fish is frozen, processed, and packaged for storage.

Public Use of Fish & Wildlife Lands

Vermont Fish & Wildlife owns 99 Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), two conservation camps, five fish culture stations, and other conservation lands totaling more than 145,000 acres throughout Vermont. WMAs were created for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and their habitats, and to provide people with opportunities to enjoy these resources through fish- and wildlife-based outdoor activities such as fishing, hunting, trapping, and wildlife viewing and photography. Wildlife Management Area maps are available at www.vtfishandwildlife.com or at Vermont Fish & Wildlife District Offices.

Definitions

Commercial activity means any activity or service that produces income for any person, group, business, or entity, including any activity or service by any nonprofit entity where a fee is required or requested.

Emergency situation means an unintended or unforeseen situation that poses a risk to health or life of a person or animal.

Authorized Activities

- A. Hunting, fishing, trapping, target

shooting at designated shooting ranges, and associated activities in accordance with all applicable Vermont Fish & Wildlife laws and regulations (where WMA maps are referred to below, go to www.vtfishandwildlife.com for more information);

- B. Fish and wildlife viewing and photography;
- C. Boating, including launching and landing, for fish- and wildlife-based activities where not otherwise prohibited by any other relevant regulations or statutes;
- D. Dispersed, wildlife-based pedestrian activities, including walking, snowshoeing, swimming, cross-country skiing, and collection of shed antlers;
- E. Noncommercial picking of berries, nuts, fungi, and other wild edibles except ginseng;
- F. Guiding for purposes of fishing, hunting, and trapping;
- G. Camping for purposes of hunting, fishing, or trapping:
 - Nonprimitive camping with a portable shelter equipped with a self-contained, portable, sanitary toilet on sites designated by the department for this purpose, for no more than 16 days during the periods of May 1–31 and Sept. 1–Dec. 15; see WMA maps for designated campsite locations.
 - Primitive camping (occupying a site in a natural environment with no developed facilities, leaving the site in its original condition so there is no or minimal evidence of human visitation) on the following WMAs for no more than three consecutive nights; campsites must be at least 200 feet from any waterbody, property line, or road within the following WMAs: Arthur Davis, Atherton Meadows (not allowed south or east of Route 100), Bald Hill, Bill Sladyk, Birdseye, Buck Lake (not allowed June, July, August), Calendar Brook, Clover Hill, East Hill (not allowed on Hunting Rights Only parcels), Hawks Mountain, Les Newell, Middlesex, Middlesex Notch, Pine Mountain, Plymbsbury, Podunk, Pomainville (not allowed west of Route 7), Riley Bostwick, Roaring Brook (allowed only on WMA contiguous with Vernon Town Forest; not allowed on private inholdings and Hunting Rights

Only parcels), Roy Mountain, Steam Mill Brook (not allowed on Flagg Pond parcel), Victory Basin, Washington, West Fairlee, West Mountain, Whipple Hollow, Whipstock Hill, White River (not allowed east of the White River), Wild Branch, Willoughby Falls WMA (allowed only on main parcel in area not mapped as wetland, west of Tarbox Hill Rd and east of Interstate 91), Worcester Woods.

Prohibited Activities

- The operation of any ATV, UTV, or any wheeled or tracked motorized vehicle not registered for public highway use, except as provided under special permit from the commissioner issued in accordance with Vermont law and the Americans With Disabilities Act;
- Use of motorized vehicles, except on roads specifically designated for such use (see WMA maps);
- Snowmobiling, except as approved by the department and on designated corridors (see WMA maps);
- Horseback riding, dog sledding, nonmotorized cycle riding, or use of motorized vehicles, except on designated corridors (see WMA maps);

- Draft and pack animals, except for retrieval of legally harvested moose, deer, and black bear during the respective hunting season(s);
- Commercial activities, except for guiding for purposes of fishing, hunting, and trapping, or wildlife viewing;
- Artifact or fossil collection;
- Fires, except in emergency situations, or for nonprimitive and primitive camping as specified in this rule;
- Abandoning or disposing of any animal carcass, or their parts, except that portions of fish or game legally harvested on the property may be deposited on site during routine field processing for preservation and transport, or parts used in conjunction with legal trapping;
- Construction or placement of temporary or permanent structures, except for tree stands and ground blinds as specified for use on state Wildlife Management Areas under **General Hunting Information**, and duck blinds as specified under the **Game Bird Hunting** section of the Hunting/Trapping Guide;
- Collection of plants, trees, evergreen brush, or limbs, except wild edibles when allowed under of this rule;

- Use of any fireworks or pyrotechnic devices, except signal flares in an emergency situation;
- Feeding or baiting of wildlife, except if otherwise authorized by law;
- Taking of fish from a fish culture station, except during special events established by the department, including, but not limited to, fishing derbies, clinics, and educational events;
- Entering within 500 feet of any building or other associated infrastructure that is associated with a department fish culture station or conservation camp during times of the day other than those times posted for public use;
- Parking of vehicles, except while engaged in an authorized activity;
- All other activities not specifically authorized by this rule, or authorized in writing by the commissioner, including, but not limited to, parasailing, hang gliding, recreational rock climbing, and geocaching.

“Conservation is a state of harmony between the people and the land.”

—Aldo Leopold

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www.vtfishandwildlife.com/vthabitatstamp

General Requirements, Definitions, and Prohibitions



Kurt Budliger

Fishing Licenses

Anyone fishing, in possession of, or transporting fish taken in Vermont waters or the Vermont/New Hampshire waters of the Connecticut River must be properly licensed and must carry the license on his/her person. The license must be shown on demand of a state game warden or other enforcement officer, or at the request of the owner of the land on which he/she is fishing.

See Table 10 (page 90) for specific Connecticut River fishing license requirements.

See Lake Champlain Regulations for reciprocal license information, page 88.

Shooting by Bow and Arrow or Spear Gun or Spearing

A person is required to hold a hunting or combination license to take fish by hand-held spear, spear gun, or shooting. A person is required to hold a fishing or combination license to take fish by bow or crossbow.

A person who takes a fish by hand-held spear, spear gun, bow or crossbow with line attached to arrow, in accordance with *10 V.S.A. App § 122*, shall keep the fish in his or her possession until the fish is permanently removed from waters of the state and used or disposed of properly.

Hand-Held Spear: A manually powered spear used from above the water's surface.

Spear Gun: A pneumatic or rubber band-powered device, with a line not to exceed 20 feet attached to a spear, used from below the water's surface. Spear guns shall be loaded and discharged only beneath the surface of the water and shall be used while snorkeling/free diving only. Spearing while scuba diving is not permitted.

Fishing Methods

Angler

Any person engaged in the take or attempted take of fish, by any method.

Open-Water Fishing

Fishing by means of hook and line in hand or attached to a rod or other device in open water, or fishing by casting or trolling baited hooks, artificial flies, or lures is considered open-water fishing. A person may take fish only by using not more than two lines of which he or she has immediate control. Each line may not have more than two baited hooks or three artificial flies or two lures with or without bait.

Ice Fishing

Ice fishing is fishing by means of hook and line in hand or attached to a rod, tip-up, jack, or bob, where the angler is fishing through a hole in the ice, from the ice, or on an object supported by the ice. Fishing by casting or trolling baited hooks, artificial flies, or lures shall not be considered ice fishing. A person may take fish only by using not more than eight lines, except on Lake Champlain where no more than fifteen lines may be used. He or she must have immediate control over all lines. Each line may not have more than two baited hooks or three artificial flies or two lures with or without bait. Six lines are allowed on the Connecticut River.

Catch and Release

Catch and release is open-water fishing as explained elsewhere, except that fish must be released immediately where caught.

Fishing Tools

Baited Hook: A single shank hook with one, two, or three points that may be baited with natural or artificial bait or both.

Downrigger: A device used to deliver fishing lines to a desired depth, and when so used, not considered a fishing line.

Fly: A single pointed hook, dressed with feathers, hair, thread, tinsel, or any similar material wound on or about the hook to which no hooks, spinners, spoons, or similar devices have been added.

Lure: A man-made device designed to catch only one fish at a time, to include a spoon, plug, spinner, bait harness, tandem-hook streamer, or lead head jig.

Planer Board: A device used to deliver fishing lines to a desired location, and when so used, not considered a fishing line.

Seasons and Hours

It is illegal to take fish of a species unless the season for that species is open on those waters.

It is illegal to fish when no season is open in those waters, or if those waters are posted as closed by regulations of the Fish & Wildlife commissioner or board.

The legal fishing day is the 24-hour period beginning at 12:00 midnight and continuing until the next 12:00 midnight. During the open season, fish may be taken at any hour of the legal fishing day, except where a shorter legal fishing day is specified in the **General Fishing Regulations and Exceptions**, or where posted otherwise.

Free Fishing Days

Vermont has two Free Fishing Days during which anyone, resident or nonresident, may fish without a license. Vermont's summer free fishing day occurs each year on the second Saturday in June. Vermont's winter free fishing day occurs each year on the last Saturday in January. All legal fishing methods and limits still apply.

Limits

The daily limit refers to the number of fish legal to keep during the legal fishing day.

The possession limit is the number of fish caught on more than one legal fishing day that an angler or ice fisherman may have in his/her possession; equal to double the daily limit.

Cull Fish

Carp, tench, rudd, shad (alewife and gizzard shad), and goldfish are considered to be “cull fish.” Additional invasive/exotic fish species may be designated by the commissioner as “cull fish.”

Immediate Control

Open-Water Fishing

A person fishing by open-water fishing must have immediate control over his or her lines. Immediate control refers to such constant control as would enable an angler to respond without delay to a fish taking his or her bait, lure, or fly.

Ice Fishing

A person ice fishing shall, at all times, have immediate control over all lines they operate. A person ice fishing shall be able to visually observe lines they operate. Any line that indicates a fish shall be tended within 30 minutes.

Fish Length Restrictions and Filleting Fish

Fish with a length restriction may be filleted or consumed on the water so long as the head, vertebrae, and tail are retained intact to enable determination of fish length. The length of a fish is considered the longest straight line and flat distance from the tip of the fish’s snout to the tip of the longer lobe of its tail when the two lobes are forced together.

Foul Hooking

Foul hooking (PROHIBITED) is hooking a fish in any other part of the body than the mouth with a hook or hooks, or manipulating hooks to hook a fish in a body part other than the mouth. A person fishing by open-water fishing or ice fishing shall not take any fish unless it is hooked in the mouth. Any fish not hooked in the mouth shall be immediately released without unnecessary injury.

Snagging

Taking or attempting to take fish by snagging is PROHIBITED in all Vermont waters. Snagging shall mean the intentional hooking of a fish in a place other than the inside of the fish’s mouth. No person shall pull, jerk, or otherwise purposefully and/or repeatedly manipulate a hook, or hooks and line, to snag or hook a fish in any method other than to entice a fish into taking, by mouth, a hook, lure, or fly. Repeated and/or exaggerated jerking or pulling of the fishing line and/or hooks in any attempt to snag fish, whether it results in physically snagging a fish or not, shall be prima-facie evidence that snagging

has taken place. This shall not apply to the use of a gaff to land a fish that has been legally hooked.

Baitfish Use and Restrictions

Commercially Purchased Baitfish

Anglers may not import baitfish into the State of Vermont without a Fish Importation Permit except:

- A person may purchase baitfish from a New York baitshop for use in the Lake Champlain black-list water (as outlined on page 27) or a New Hampshire baitshop for use in the Connecticut River black-list water, provided the baitshop is Vermont-licensed, and the baitfish are accompanied by a Vermont-issued baitfish transportation receipt. Baitfish purchased in New York or New Hampshire for use on Lake Champlain or the Connecticut River must also adhere to the list of approved species in Vermont. For a description of the Lake Champlain and Connecticut River black-list waters please see the Black-list Waters section on page 27–28.

A person purchasing commercial baitfish must retain and show upon request a transportation receipt issued by a state-approved commercial bait dealer, authorizing transportation of baitfish overland by motorized vehicle. The receipt must contain the following information: 1) A unique receipt identification number, 2) Name/ telephone number of the bait dealer, 3) date/time of sale, 4) species purchased, 5) quantity purchased, 6) baitfish zone or black-list water (limited to one) in which the baitfish will be used, and 7) the signature of purchaser.

A transportation receipt is valid for 10 days from the time and date of sale only for the baitfish zone or black-list water recorded on the receipt. For descriptions of black-list waters and baitfish zones please see the Baitfish Zones and Black-list Waters Map on page 29 and the Black-list Waters and Baitfish Zones sections on page 26–28.

Baitfish may be held beyond the 10-day period on the water in a pen or baitbox 25 cubic feet or less in volume. The baitbox must be marked with name, address, and telephone number of the owner and user.

A person may transport unused commercially purchased baitfish away from a waterbody and use it within 10 days in the same baitfish zone or black-list water as indicated on the transportation receipt:

Zoned baitfish receipt (East Zone/ West Zone)

- May be used on multiple non-black-list waters in the same zone.
- May be used on a black-list water in that specific zone, but once used on that water it cannot be taken off the water.
- May not be used in a different baitfish zone other than what’s indicated on the receipt.

Black-list water baitfish receipt

- May be used back and forth ONLY on the black-list water listed on the receipt (Note: Commercially purchased rainbow smelt may not be transported off the black-list water once brought onto the water)

A person transporting unused commercially purchased baitfish away from a waterbody for later use may hold them in any non-black-list water within the baitfish zone listed on the baitfish transportation receipt as long as:

- The baitfish did not come in contact with a black-list water, AND
- The baitfish may not be stored in waters where baitfish use is prohibited.

A person transporting unused commercially purchased baitfish away from a waterbody to use later may not store them in waters of a different baitfish zone. These baitfish must be kept in a closed container isolated from any flow of lake, pond, or stream water.

Commercially prepared and preserved baitfish and fish eggs available from retail stores may be purchased and used as bait, taken home, and kept for later use provided they are retained in the original packaging at all times.

Personal Baitfish Harvest

Personally harvested baitfish may be used on the same waterbody from which they were collected. A person may harvest and use only the following fish species (*Approved Species*) as bait: banded killifish, blacknose dace, bluntnose minnow, common shiner, creek chub, eastern silvery minnow, emerald shiner, fallfish, fathead minnow, golden shiner, longnose dace, longnose sucker, mimic shiner, northern redbelly dace, spottail shiner, white sucker. Rainbow smelt may be taken only by open-water/ice fishing.

Bluegill, pumpkinseed, rock bass, and yellow perch may be taken only by open-water/ice fishing and used for bait only in those waters where taken.

On Lake Champlain, alewife and white perch may be taken only by open-water/ice fishing and used as bait in Lake Champlain; Alewife may only be used/possessed if dead.

Except in Seasonally Closed Waters, baitfish may be taken for personal use by the following methods: a) minnow traps no longer than 18 inches with an entrance not exceeding 1 inch in diameter; b) dip nets, cast nets, and umbrella nets not exceeding a total of 51 square feet of mesh, or a seine net not exceeding 25 feet in length; c) open-water fishing/ice fishing by hook and line.

In Seasonally Closed Waters, the personal harvest of baitfish is only allowed between the second Saturday in April through Oct. 31, during open season for trout, and then only by open-water fishing or the use of minnow traps no longer than 18 inches with an entrance not exceeding 1 inch in diameter. Most lakes, ponds, and streams that follow Table 1 and Table 3 (pages 84 and 85) rules are Seasonally Closed Waters.

Anglers may hold baitfish on the water in a pen or baitbox 25 cubic feet or less in volume. All traps, nets, baitboxes or other holding receptacles capable of taking, holding or keeping live baitfish in public waters must be marked with the name, address, and telephone number of the owner and user.

The personal harvest of baitfish is prohibited on any waterbody of the state that is defined as closed to baitfish harvest. The department will maintain and make available a list of closed waters.

Personal Baitfish Harvest – Movement/Transport

Personally harvested baitfish taken from black-list waters may not be transported away or used on any other waterbody. For a list and description of black-list waters please see the Baitfish Zones and Black-list Waters Map on page 29 and the Black-list Waters section on pages 27–28.

Anglers who wish to use, sell, or transport personally harvested wild baitfish outside of the waterbody in which they were harvested must possess and show upon request a wild baitfish endorsement on their fishing/combination license. To obtain this wild baitfish endorsement, anglers must successfully complete a wild baitfish endorsement course online. To learn more about the rules associated with catching and using your own wild baitfish and to learn about the wild baitfish endorsement course please go to www.vtfishandwildlife.com/wild-baitfish and refer to the full baitfish regulation (10 V.S.A App. §141).

Anglers who possess a valid wild baitfish endorsement on their fishing/combination license may transport personally harvested baitfish away from a non-black-list water and use it in the same baitfish zone it was harvested in as long as the use of baitfish is allowed on that water. Refer to the Baitfish Zones and Black-list Waters Map on page 29 or the Index of Waters on

pages 59–83 to determine what baitfish zone a waterbody is located in.

Anglers who possess a valid wild baitfish endorsement on their fishing/combination license may hold personally harvested baitfish in any non-black-list water within the baitfish zone they were harvested in as long as:

- The baitfish did not come in contact with a black-list water, AND
- The baitfish may not be stored in waters where baitfish use is prohibited.

Anglers who possess a valid wild baitfish endorsement on their fishing/combination license may hold personally harvested baitfish in a different baitfish zone if the baitfish are kept in a container isolated from any flow of lake, pond, or stream water or outflows to such waters of the state.

Fish eggs may be collected from legally harvested fish from a Vermont water and used immediately as bait on that water unless that waterbody is closed to baitfish collection. Personally harvested fish eggs must not be transported and used in any other waterbody. It is illegal to transport fish eggs back and forth from the same waterbody for use as bait unless they have been processed in a manner approved by the department.

Personally Harvested Baitfish Sale

It is illegal for an angler to sell personally harvested baitfish except:

- Anglers may sell personally harvested baitfish to another angler while on the same waterbody where the baitfish were personally harvested.
- Anglers who possess a valid wild baitfish endorsement on their fishing/combination license may sell personally harvested rainbow smelt from a non-black-list water to a licensed commercial baitfish dealer as long as:
 - ▶ The dealer possesses a valid zone-specific commercial baitfish dealers permit for the same baitfish zone the rainbow smelt were harvested in.
 - ▶ The angler must complete and sign an affidavit specifying the waterbody where the personally harvested rainbow smelt were harvested from. This form will be provided from the department to the commercial baitfish dealer.

Approved Species of Fish for use as Bait

- Banded killifish
- Blacknose dace
- Bluntnose minnow
- Common shiner
- Creek chub

- Eastern silvery minnow
- Emerald shiner
- Fallfish
- Fathead minnow
- Golden shiner
- Longnose dace
- Longnose sucker
- Mimic shiner
- Northern redbelly dace
- Spottail shiner
- White sucker
- Rainbow smelt may be taken only by open-water/ice fishing and may be commercially sold as bait.
- Bluegill, pumpkinseed, rock bass, yellow perch may only be taken by open-water/ice fishing and used for bait only in those waters where taken and shall not be transported alive from waters where caught.

On Lake Champlain bluegill, pumpkinseed, rock bass, yellow perch and white perch may be taken by open-water fishing or ice fishing, may not be transported alive, may only be used for bait on Lake Champlain, and may not be commercially harvested or sold as bait. Alewife may only be used/possessed if dead.

All other species of fish are prohibited for use as bait.

Baitfish Zones

Baitfish Zone Dividing Line – A line extending from the Massachusetts border following Route 8A north to Route 112, north on Route 112 to Route 100 in Whitingham, north on Route 100 to East Jamaica, northwest on Route 30/100 to Rawsonville, north on Route 100 to Ludlow, north on Route 103/100 to Grahamville, north on Route 100 to Route 4/100, west on Route 4/100 to Killington, north on Route 100 to Morrisville, west on Route 15/100 to Hyde Park, north on Route 100 to Troy, north on Route 101 to Route 105, north on Route 105 to Route 243 in North Troy, north on Route 243 to the Canadian border.

Eastern Baitfish Zone – The baitfish zone including waters lying east of the Baitfish Zone Dividing Line.

Western Baitfish Zone – The baitfish zone including waters lying west of the Baitfish Zone Dividing Line.

Refer to the Baitfish Zones and Black-list Waters Map on page 29 and the Index of Waters on pages 59–83 to determine what baitfish zone a particular waterbody is located in.