

## STATEMENT OF REASONS

### WYOMING GAME AND FISH COMMISSION

#### CHAPTER 46

#### FISHING REGULATIONS

W.S. §23-1-302(a) directs and empowers the Commission to fix season and bag limits, open, shorten or close seasons on any species or sex of wildlife (defined in §23-1-101) and to establish rules and regulations necessary for control of the game species.

Fishing regulations are usually set for a two-year period unless it is necessary to reflect legislative changes in regulation. This regulation will become effective January 1, 2026, following action by the Commission in July 2025. Following action by the Commission in July, the Department will have five (5) months to print and distribute the 2026 Fishing Regulations.

##### Section 2. Definitions;

(a)(i)(A): Clarifying that a “Pegged Attractor” fished within two inches of a hook is an “Artificial Lure”.

(u): New definition of “Pegged Attractor” to encompass Trout Beads and other materials that are progressively popular and fished on a line or leader above a hook. The technique is unique to other artificial lures in that the attractor is pulled from the mouth of the fish by the angler and the hook embeds outside the mouth; contributing to buccal injury and deformities in catch and release fisheries.

(x): New definition of “Single-point Barbless Hook” to provide a regulatory description of hooks that are easier to remove and have lower probability of injuring or deforming fish in heavily utilized catch and release fisheries.

(aa): Removal of “Trout Bead” definition. The new “Pegged Attractor” definition includes what this term previously described.

##### Section 4. Methods;

Multiple organizational and formatting edits have been incorporated into these regulations that do not result in any changes in regulation. This includes a substantive reorganization of Section 4. These changes are proposed to provide a more logical flow and to simplify interpretation.

(c): Language changed from “Trout Bead” to “Pegged Attractor” in accordance with changes in Definitions (Section 2).

New subsection (d): Providing clarification that floating strike indicators are legal. Removing confusion that they could be interpreted as a “Pegged Attractor” and constitute snagging as described in sub Section (c).

(f): Adding North Platte River drainage (as described in Section 32) to waters where anglers must keep walleye and sauger intact so that length can be determined while fishing but they may process/fillet their catch once off the water or ice at the end of the fishing day.

Section 5. Creel Limits;

(a) and (b): Change in placement of language regarding the exceptions to statewide creel limits to improve comprehension by the reader.

Section 10. Underwater Spear Gun Fishing.

(d): Change in terminology for improved comprehension of intended regulation.

Section 17. Area 1 Exceptions to General Provisions;

(c) and (g): Clarification of fishing closure boundaries on Nowlin and Flat creeks.

(k): Changes to the creel limit providing additional opportunity to harvest brown trout in the short reach of the Snake River below Jackson Lake dam where brown trout are common and where anglers that use bait and are intent on harvest concentrate.

Section 20. Grand Teton National Park and John D. Rockefeller Jr. Memorial Parkway Exceptions to General Provisions.

(g)(i): Removal of October fishing closure on Jackson Lake. The 75-year old closure (aimed to protect spawning lake trout) dates to a period when most anglers harvested their catch and the Department was actively stocking to establish lake trout. Lake trout are now fully established and angler harvest has shrunk considerably. There are no longer biological reasons for the October closure.

Section 22. Area 2 Exceptions to General Provisions.

(d)(ii)(A): Change in creel limits on Buffalo Bill Reservoir to provide for additional harvest opportunity of brown trout that have increased in abundance. Propose allowing for only two cutthroat or rainbow trout or their hybrids due to difficulty in differentiation by anglers and to provide a sustainable level of harvest based on current angling pressure. Removing the length restriction on trout to minimize additional handling and mortality associated with measuring.

(o)(i): Change to spawning closure dates to provide two additional weeks of fishing opportunity on the North Fork Shoshone River in April.

(p)(i): Changes in creel limits intended to simplify regulations for anglers by removing species and length restriction while providing what research has determined is a sustainable level of harvest with current angling pressure.

(p)(ii) and (p)(iii): Extension of reservoir “nongame fish” and “must kill” regulations for walleye in Buffalo Bill Reservoir to the North Fork Shoshone River upstream of the reservoir where this illegally introduced species threatens the trout fishery.

Section 28. Area 4 Exceptions to General Provisions.

(h): Removal of fishing closure on Flume Creek intended to protect spawning kokanee that would enter a spawning trap to facilitate egg collection by the Department. The kokanee spawning operation for which the stream was closed never proved feasible and all efforts have been abandoned.

Section 32. Area 5 Exceptions to General Provisions.

(e)(i): Removal of Alcova Reservoir specific walleye creel limit due to the change below in (o) that would include Alcova Reservoir.

New subsection (h): Reduction in trout creel limit and addition of a length restriction at Diamond Lake in an attempt to provide opportunity for anglers to catch more large trout.

New subsection (o): Change in walleye creel limit for the entire North Platte drainage above Dave Johnston Dam (including Alcova, Pathfinder and Seminoe Reservoirs) to allow additional harvest of smaller walleye. Slow growth, steady reproduction, limited forage and low mortality has resulted in an overpopulation of small walleye.

New subsection (p): Clarification of landmark on the North Platte River near Saratoga.

New subsection (q): Elimination of landmark designating transition from river to reservoir as the current landmark used is indiscernible during some water elevations.

New subsections (q)(i) and (s): Requiring “single-point barbless” hooks to decrease handling, injury and buccal deformity while still permitting the use of live baitfish and other baits in two reaches of the North Platte River. Angling in these reaches is dominated by anglers using artificial flies and lures that release their catch, but is popular with some harvest oriented bait anglers.

New subsections (r)(ii) and (t)(ii): Requiring “single-point barbless” artificial flies and lures only to decrease handling, injury and buccal deformity in two heavily utilized catch and release fisheries on the North Platte River and specifically prohibiting the use of “pegged attractors” (a type of fishing lure by definition). The specific prohibition of pegged attractors is intended to avoid the increased rate of severe injury that is associated with the use of this tackle.

New subsection (t): Extending the reach of North Platte River below Gray Reef Dam that is covered by more restrictive creel limits and gear restrictions due to public desires and heavy use by catch and release oriented anglers.

New subsection (t)(iii): Extending the fishing closure by two weeks to protect spawning rainbow trout below Gray Reef Dam.

New subsection (t)(iv): Adding a fishing closure of one and two tenths (1.2) miles on a portion of the North Platte River where many of the rivers rainbow trout congregate to spawn in April and May.

### Section 33. Area 5 Live Baitfish.

(b)(i)(F): Extending the area where the use of live baitfish is prohibited on the North Platte River; consistent with the extension of the Artificial Flies and Lures only regulation in Section 32.

The name of the current Commission President and the date the Commission is expected to take action on this regulation have been updated.

Minor grammatical and formatting edits have been incorporated into this Chapter which do not change the meaning of existing regulations.