



Information Related to the Proposed Changes to Minimum Size and Creel Limits of Spotted Seatrout (Speckled Trout)

Have the new regulations been finalized?

No, the Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries Commission (Commission) approved a Notice of Intent (NOI) to change the Spotted Seatrout regulations. As part of the process, the public can provide comment on the proposed changes until December 30, 2022.

What are the new proposed regulations?

13.5-inch minimum total length and 15 fish per person daily creel limit.

What is the goal of changing the regulations?

The management target for Spotted Seatrout is a female spawning stock biomass of 6.2 million pounds. In order to achieve that target within 5 years, we must reduce the harvest of female Spotted Seatrout by a minimum of 20% per year.

Why does the harvest need to be reduced?

The stock is currently overfished, meaning there are not enough fish to sustain the population at desired levels in the future. In addition to being overfished, increased fishing pressure has led to overfishing (too many fish being harvested) for 7 of the last 10 years.

Why a 20% reduction?

A 20% reduction in the harvest of female Spotted Seatrout was the lowest level of reduction that would achieve the management target.

Why a five year recovery timeline?

The time it will take to reach the management target with a 20% reduction in female Spotted Seatrout harvest.

Why a 15 fish creel limit?

Based on public input collected during numerous public meetings and an e-mail/web survey, the 15 fish per person daily creel limit was the most supported creel limit option.

Why 13.5 inch and not 13 inch minimum size?

A 13.5-inch minimum length limit provides a 20% reduction with a 15 fish daily creel limit. It also allows fish to live longer and reach larger sizes in order to rebuild the historical age structure of the population. Under the proposed regulations, nearly 100% of female fish will be able to spawn once prior to reaching harvestable size, including 5 times more age-2 fish when compared to the existing 12-inch minimum length limit. A 13" minimum length limit would not achieve the required 20% reduction in harvest when paired with a 15 fish daily creel limit.

Why not propose a 12-inch minimum length limit with a 15 fish creel limit?

Maintaining the 12-inch minimum length limit DOES NOT lead to the management target UNLESS the daily creel limit is reduced to at least nine fish per person per day. This combination would result in only an 8% reduction in female harvest per year.

Were other options considered that would achieve the 20% harvest reduction of female Spotted Seatrout?

LDWF presented the Commission with several options for rebuilding the stock in 2019 and 2021. These options were also presented to the public in an online survey that was emailed to saltwater license holders and was available on LDWF's website.

Minimum Length Limit (inches)	Creel	Percent Reduction	*Strongly Support or Slightly Support
12	9	21	29.3%
12.5	10	21	Not Assessed
13	11	21	39.9%
13.5	15	20	50.9%
14	25	21	34.3%

**Results from the electronic survey. The survey was available on the LDWF website and available to anyone.*

Will the increase in the minimum length limit actually increase harvest of female Spotted Seatrout?

Yes, a 13.5 inch minimum length limit will increase the proportion of female Spotted Seatrout harvested compared to males by 3%; however, overall harvest of female Spotted Seatrout will be reduced by 20%.

All other Gulf of Mexico states (TX, MS, AL, FL) have increased Spotted Seatrout minimum limits and range from 15 to 17 inches. None of these states have documented issues with increases in the proportion of female trout harvested compared to males.

Is habitat loss a factor?

Habitat loss is a factor in the declining health of the Spotted Seatrout stock, as well as environmental conditions and events such as fluctuating salinity, freezes, etc. The population modeling techniques used by LDWF include 39 years of data that account for these factors as well as harvest estimates.

Why change angling regulations when many other factors are at play?

Reducing harvest of the stock is the only factor LDWF can control to help rebuild the stock. Ultimately, no matter the cause, the stock is now at a level that cannot support the harvest pressure it once could.

What about removing guide limits from charter boat trips?

Restricting charter boat captain guide limits would only result in a 1% reduction in the overall trout harvest.

We encourage everyone to review this information and the information on our website
([Hot Topic: Spotted Seatrout](#) | [Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries](#))

to better understand the current status of the Spotted Seatrout fishery and the potential management options.