

ODFW working to simplify state fishing regulations

SALEM — For new anglers, Oregon's complex fishing regulations can be daunting. Even seasoned anglers claim they frequently need a law degree to help them understand what's allowed and what's not.

Over the years, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has heard an earful from the fishing community about how its regulations make fishing less fun, and pose a barrier to new anglers getting started.

Earlier this year, the agency embarked on a process to try to simplify the state's trout and warmwater fishing regulations in time for the 2016 seasons.

"We've looked at every water body across the state, trying to develop common regulations, consistent language, and increased fishing opportunities," said Mike Gauvin, ODFW recreational fisheries program manager.

Because of their popularity and appeal to beginning

anglers, the simplification process is beginning with trout and warmwater fisheries, Gauvin added.

"We're excited to share with the public the progress we've made simplifying fishing regulations," Gauvin said.

Working with local district fish biologists and Oregon State Police officers, the simplification process took aim at the many "special regulations" that applied to individual water bodies across the state.

The goal was to reduce the number of special regulations to those with a clearly identified biological or management purpose, and to streamline the remaining regulations into fewer, more consistent categories, Gauvin said.

Examples of some of the changes include:

- Eliminating the April trout opener and (with a few exceptions) opening those areas to year-round fishing.
- Standardizing catch limits

for trout.

• Maintaining consistency in the how the regulations are listed.

"There still will be a few exceptions to the general rules," Gauvin said, "but they will be far fewer and easier to understand."

Not only will the rules themselves be simplified, but there will be an easier-to-read format and clearer language in the sport fishing regulations booklet.

Beginning in 2016, regulations will be adopted, and new regulation booklets will be printed, every two years instead of every year.

"Trout and warmwater regulations don't change much from year-to-year, and in-season regulations for salmon are posted on the ODFW website, so we saw an opportunity to save some money and time by printing regulations less often," Gauvin said.

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