

# Fisheries Management Zone 10

## French River



The French River flows from Lake Nipissing in Fisheries Management Zone (FMZ) 11 through FMZ 10 before emptying into Georgian Bay. The French River is a popular recreational destination and attracts anglers from across North America. The French River has a long history of high fishing pressure. For this reason, it has been managed with exception regulations for many species.

### Proposed regulation changes for French River

In the French River proposed regulation changes for walleye, northern pike, and bass are in response to advice from stakeholders including members of Advisory Councils for FMZ 10 and FMZ 11. The objective of the regulation proposal is to increase consistency in regulations throughout the French River system and ease restrictions where there are no conservation concerns.

### Proposed regulation change for walleye

We are proposing a change to the French River walleye regulation to meet the FMZ 10 objectives:

- increase the number of mature spawning walleye ( $\geq 350$  mm);
- decrease mortality and increase biomass (meaning kilograms of fish in an area) in the river; and,
- maintain the quantity and quality of angling opportunities.

### Option 1: Maintain status quo

- Size limits: none between 40-60 cm, not more than 1 greater than 60 cm.
- Season: open January 1 to March 31 and third Saturday in May to December 31.
- Sport licence - 4 and conservation licence - 2

### Option 2: Modify size limits and seasons

- Size limits: none between **43-60 cm**, not more than 1 greater than 60 cm.
- Season: Open January 1 to **third Sunday in March**, and third Saturday in May to December 31.
- Sport licence - 4 and conservation licence - 2

## Reason for proposed regulation change for walleye

Walleye is the preferred target species among anglers in the French River, and fishing pressure is high. In the 1990s, it was recognized that the walleye fishery in the river had declined. Significant monitoring efforts and consultation conducted by the French River Community Fisheries Enhancement Committee resulted in regulation changes in 1995. The changes implemented were meant to address the high fishing pressure. Regulations became less restrictive in 2010. Results of 2013 monitoring showed further signs of improvement in walleye indicators such as increased abundance, and larger walleye (greater than 60cm), showing that the current French River slot size has successfully protected walleye populations. During the draft management planning process, the ministry recognized the opportunity to align slot sizes and seasons for the entire French River (FMZ 10 and FMZ11 portions) with the zone. These changes were supported by the advisory council and will make it easier for anglers to understand the rules.

## Proposed regulation change for northern pike

We are proposing a change to the French River northern pike regulation to meet the FMZ 10 objectives:

- maintain current abundance and promote healthy northern pike age structure by protecting larger pike; and
- maintain opportunities for northern pike angling and harvest.

### Option 1: Maintain status quo

- Size limits: none between 53 – 86 cm, and not more than 1 greater than 86 cm.
- Season: open January 1 to March 31 and third Saturday in May to December 31.
- Sport licence - 4 and conservation licence - 2

### Option 2: Modify size limits and seasons

- Size limits: **none between 70 - 90 cm and not more than 1 greater than 90 cm.**
- Season: open January 1 to **3rd Sunday in March** and third Saturday in May to December 31.
- Sport licence - 4 and conservation licence - 2

### Option 3: Modify size limits and seasons

- Size limit: Sport licence: **not more than 1 greater than 61 cm, none greater than 86cm**, conservation licence: **none greater than 61cm.**
- Season: open January 1 to **third Sunday in March** and third Saturday in May to December 31.
- Sport licence - 4 and conservation licence - 2

## Reason for proposed regulation change for northern pike

There have been no sustainability issues identified by stakeholders or during previous surveys that would indicate the French River pike regulation should differ from the zone wide seasons or catch and possession limits. To meet the FMZ 10 plan objectives for pike, we are proposing to align the entire French River season with the FMZ 11 season and adopt the size limit for either Option 2 or 3 from the zone, which both protect large pike and work towards a quality fishery.

## Proposed regulation change for bass

We are proposing a change to the French River smallmouth and largemouth bass regulation to meet the FMZ 10 objective:

- maintain angling opportunities for bass, while enhancing population size structure, consistent with the sustainability of populations.

### Option 1: Maintain status quo

- Size limits: none between 33-43 cm, not more than 1 greater than 43 cm.
- Season: Zone seasons apply.
  - FMZ 10 portion: open third Saturday in June to November 30.
  - FMZ 11 portion open January 1 to third Sunday in March and third Saturday in May to December 31.
- Sport licence - 4 and conservation licence - 2

### Option 2: Modify size limits and seasons

- Size limits: **remove slot size limits.**
- Season: **open January 1 to third Sunday in March and third Saturday in May to December 31.**
- Sport licence – **6** and conservation licence – **2**

## Reason for the proposed regulation change for bass

Broadscale index netting data shows that bass are doing well in both FMZ 10 and FMZ 11. There was no concern expressed by the Advisory Council regarding the sustainability of bass populations, and that the French River season, slot limit and catch and possession limits could be aligned with the FMZ 11 zone to simplify the regulations for anglers.

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