

Game and Fish Policy and Technical Changes



Summary

Each year, the DNR proposes policy-related and technical changes to Minnesota statutes related to programs administered by the DNR. This year's proposed changes will help the DNR manage the state's natural resources adaptively and respond to public input. The 2024 policy and technical bill focuses on changes related to our game and fish management including fisheries management, elk and deer management, and improving access for new trappers.

Proposal

Sustainable Fisheries Management

This portion of the proposal contains initiatives that clarify the DNR's intent on trout, channel catfish, and sturgeon fishing seasons, as well as updates public input requirements when the agency considers special and experimental seasons. The proposal also includes recommendations made to the legislature regarding fish previously classified as rough fish. The changes allow the DNR to manage Minnesota's fisheries more effectively and efficiently.

Native Rough Fish

This portion of the proposal adds the term "native" to rough fish citations in statute and rule; adds native rough fish to aquatic farm operations; clarifies the definition of native rough fish; adds native rough fish when considering fishing and motor boat restrictions; separates carp species from native rough fish; removes rough fish from fishing contests that do not require a permit; changes the native rough

fishing spearing and bowfishing season dates to May 1 through the last day in February; and adds native rough fish to various fishing regulations statutes in Minnesota Statute 97C.

Special and Experimental Regulations

This change adds flexibility to public input requirements for proposed special and experimental fishing regulations, waiving in-person meetings when other meaningful input opportunities are offered.



Trout Regulations

This change would clarify the state's trout fishing seasons to ensure consistency statewide.

Channel Catfish Continuous Season

This change clarifies that the required continuous season applies only to channel catfish and does not include flathead catfish.

Sturgeon Catch and Release on Inland Waters

This change clarifies that sturgeon can be caught and released lawfully.



Sustainable Wildlife Management

This portion of the proposal includes three policy changes related to elk and deer management and hunting. The changes below would address concerns related to importing cervid carcasses, clarify when blaze orange is required on ground blinds, and to help sustainably manage elk in Minnesota. The proposal also includes an apprentice trapper certification program.

Carcass Import/Movement and Taxidermist Waste Disposal

This proposal changes the carcass import ban to allow hunters to bring whole cervid (i.e., deer, elk, moose) heads into the state only if they are brought to a licensed taxidermist within 48 hours of entering the state. Taxidermists will be required to use a lined landfill for their biological waste, reducing the risk of spreading wildlife diseases like chronic wasting disease.

Blaze Orange on Ground Blinds

This change clarifies that the blaze orange requirements for ground blinds used on public land applies only to deer hunters and does not apply to turkey, waterfowl or bear hunters.

Elk Management Plan and Population Goals

This change repeals the current statutory language connecting the size of Minnesota's elk herd to elk damage payments, thereby giving the DNR greater ability to manage and potentially increase Minnesota's elk herd. Any increase in elk population goals requires strong public support and working with agricultural producers to prevent or limit damage caused by elk.

Create Apprentice Trapper Certification

This change would create an Apprentice Trapper Certification, allowing people to purchase a trapping license without having completed trapper education if they were accompanied by a licensed trapper over age 18 while setting or tending traps.

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