

Smallmouth Bass and Rock Bass Regulation Changes under Consideration for the 2017 Season Public Input Summary



Missouri Department of Conservation
May 2016



Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
INTRODUCTION	6
<i>ISSUE SUMMARY</i>	6
<i>KEY MESSAGES</i>	7
PROPOSED REGULATION CHANGES FOR SMALLMOUTH BASS AND ROCK BASS UNDER CONSIDERATION	8
OPEN HOUSES	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
<i>OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY</i>	9
<i>THEMES AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED AT OPEN HOUSES</i>	10
<i>COMMENTS FOR THE PROPOSED REGULATION CHANGES FOR SMALLMOUTH BASS AND ROCK BASS UNDER CONSIDERATION</i>	11
<i>ADDITIONAL THEMES AND ISSUES</i>	14
ONLINE OPEN HOUSE	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.17
<i>ONLINE OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY</i>	17
<i>THEMES AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED THROUGH ONLINE OPEN HOUSE</i>	17
<i>COMMENTS FOR THE PROPOSED REGULATION CHANGES FOR SMALLMOUTH BASS AND ROCK BASS UNDER CONSIDERATION</i>	19
<i>ADDITIONAL THEMES AND ISSUES</i>	24
COMMENTS RECEIVED DIRECTLY (VIA MAIL OR PHONE CALL)	27
<i>SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED DIRECTLY</i>	27
<i>THEMES AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED THROUGH COMMENTS RECEIVED DIRECTLY</i>	27
WORDLE VISUAL SUMMARY OF ALL COMMENTS RECEIVED	30
APPENDICES	31
<i>Appendix A. Open House Comments</i>	32
<i>Appendix B. Online Comments</i>	36
<i>Appendix C. Comments that Were Mailed to the Department from September 1, 2015-October 31, 2015.</i>	77
<i>Appendix D. Handouts at the Open Houses</i>	80
<i>Appendix E. Maps</i>	83

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- During September and October 2015, eight Open Houses were held to gather public input regarding six possible Smallmouth Bass and Rock Bass regulation changes under consideration for the 2017 season, along with a web page to collect additional comments.
- Sixty-two people attended an additional public meeting on April 8, 2016 in Van Buren, MO. This meeting was requested by the Current River Smallmouth Bass Association.
- Over 70 staff from four (4) Divisions worked the Open Houses.
- A total of 129 attendees participated in at least one of the eight Open Houses and provided almost 85 comments with others providing their comments online.
- From September 1, 2015-October 31, 2015, 193 people provided over 340 comments online during the Online Open House.
- Five people provided 13 comments to Department offices, the Regulations Committee, the Department website and letters mailed to Policy Coordination.
- Over 430 comments were received from the Open Houses, Online Open House and through Department offices.
- Most commenters were male (99 percent of online comments, 93 percent of Open House comments).
- Seventy-five percent of online commenters provided an email address so they could receive future updates, as compared to 70 percent of Open House participants.
- Online comments that were in favor of the possible regulation changes were the most numerous; followed by support for having a 15-inch statewide Smallmouth Bass length limit; then support for increasing the Rock Bass length limit to eight (8) inches; and increasing the Smallmouth Bass length limit to 18 inches;
- Open House comments that were in favor of the possible regulation changes were the most numerous; followed by support for increasing the Smallmouth Bass limit to 18 inches; then support for having a 15-inch statewide Smallmouth Bass length limit and increasing the Rock Bass length limit to eight (8) inches statewide.
- The most common themes and issues included:
 - Simplify the Rock Bass minimum length limit
 - Support the proposed Rock Bass seven (7)-inch length limit
 - Support the current Rock Bass length limit
 - Support an increased statewide Rock Bass limit to eight (8) inches

- Maintain the existing Smallmouth Bass minimum length limit of 12 inches and daily limit of six (6) fish on streams (other than Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas)
 - Support the current regulation of a minimum length limit of 12 inches and daily limit of six (6) fish on streams
 - Support increasing the length limit on Smallmouth Bass
 - Support decreasing the daily limit of Smallmouth Bass
 - Support catch and release for Smallmouth Bass

- Consolidate all Stream Black Bass Special Management Area regulations for Smallmouth Bass to a 15-inch minimum length limit and one (1) fish per day creel limit
 - Support the proposed regulation change to consolidate all Stream Black Bass Special Management Area regulations
 - Support a more restrictive length and creel limit
 - Support catch and release in these management areas
 - Areas to be known as Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas

- Create a new Smallmouth Bass Special Management Area on the Current River
 - Support the proposed Smallmouth Bass Special Management Area on the Current River
 - Support the current Smallmouth Bass Management Areas
 - Support the proposed Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas on additional rivers

- Expand the boundaries of the Jacks Fork, Big Piney, Meramec and Big River Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas
 - Support the proposed regulation of expanding of the boundaries of the Jacks Fork, Big Piney, Meramec and Big River Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas
 - Support the current boundaries
 - Support the expansion of the Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas on additional rivers

- Sentiment at the April 8, 2016 public meeting in Van Buren was in opposition to the proposed addition of a Smallmouth Bass Special Management Area on the Current River
 - Support the current regulations on the Current River
 - Support the expansion of the Jacks Fork Smallmouth Bass Special Management Area.
 - Support the statewide regulations on the Current River
 - Support the 15-inch minimum length limit and daily limit of one (1) fish

INTRODUCTION

ISSUE SUMMARY

Based on research and angler survey information, the Missouri Department of Conservation (the Department) is proposing changes to existing fishing regulations to provide long-term, sustainable Smallmouth Bass and Rock Bass (also known as Goggle-Eye) populations in Ozark streams, as well as to simplify regulations for anglers.

Smallmouth Bass and Rock Bass fishing are very popular in Missouri Ozark streams. Anglers took an average of 9-10 fishing trips per year and, on average, harvested less than two Smallmouth Bass and four Rock Bass per trip. While angler success is high, so is the natural mortality for these species in Ozark streams. Mortality causes include difficulty finding food, changing water temperature, floods, and predators. In addition, the growth rate of both of these species is slow. In five years, a Smallmouth Bass will average 12 inches in length while a Rock Bass will be eight inches. Due to existing mortality rates, few Smallmouth Bass or Rock Bass will live longer than seven (7) years.

In order for regulations to produce a significant change in increasing the number of fish or the size of fish in the population, three factors must occur: 1) fish need to grow relatively fast and live relatively long; 2) natural mortality rates need to be low; 3) harvest mortality rates need to be high. Changes to existing regulations need to be considered for providing long-term, quality fishing opportunities for these two popular Ozark stream species.

In a recent angler survey, more than 40 percent of anglers felt Rock Bass fishing quality had declined over the past 10 years and the majority of anglers favored implementation of a statewide minimum length limit. For Smallmouth Bass, having statewide regulations with special management areas was well accepted by most anglers surveyed. In addition, the current statewide Smallmouth Bass minimum length limit of 12-inches is adequate to balance quality fishing and harvest opportunities on most Ozark streams.

KEY MESSAGES

- The Department is proposing changes to existing fishing regulations to provide long-term, sustainable Smallmouth Bass and Rock Bass populations in Ozark streams and to simplify regulations for anglers.
- **For Smallmouth Bass**, while there would be no change to the current statewide 12-inch minimum length limit, proposed regulations would consolidate all Stream Black Bass Special Management Area regulations to a 15-inch minimum limit and one (1) fish per day creel limit applying only to Smallmouth Bass. The Stream Black Bass Special Management Areas would be renamed to Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas to be consistent with the current Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas. Proposed regulations would expand the boundaries of the Jacks Fork, Big Piney, Meramec, and Big River Stream Black Bass Special Management Areas. These proposed regulations to special management areas would simplify regulations for anglers while also providing long-term success of Smallmouth Bass with increased length limits.
- **For Rock Bass**, there is no current length limit. Due to the slow growth rate and the high mortality rate in Ozark streams, the proposed regulations would implement a statewide seven (7)-inch minimum length limit.
- The Department sought public input on these proposed regulation changes for both Smallmouth Bass and Rock Bass through eight Open Houses at various locations around the state in September and October 2015. Coupled with research and angler surveys, this public input will be considered as a key component of the regulations process through the Department's Regulations Committee and the Conservation Commission.
- Department staff continued to gather public input from a concerned group of anglers in April 2016 regarding the addition of a special management area on the Current River.

PROPOSED REGULATION CHANGES FOR SMALLMOUTH BASS AND ROCK BASS UNDER CONSIDERATION

Smallmouth Bass Regulations

- Maintain the existing statewide 12-inch minimum length limit and six (6) fish daily limit on streams (other than Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas).
- Propose to consolidate all Stream Black Bass Special Management Area regulations for Smallmouth Bass to:
 - 15-inch minimum length limit and
 - One (1) fish per day creel limit
 - Areas to be known as Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas

Proposed New and Expanded Special Management Areas

- Create a new Smallmouth Bass Special Management Area on the Current River.
- Expand the boundaries of the Jacks Fork, Big Piney, Meramec and Big River Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas.

Rock Bass Regulations

- Maintain Rock Bass Special Management Areas, except for Osage Fork of Gasconade River.
- Propose a statewide Rock Bass minimum length limit of seven (7) inches.

OPEN HOUSES

OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY

During September and October 2015, eight Open House meetings were conducted to gather public input regarding proposed regulation changes for Smallmouth Bass and Rock Bass under consideration, along with a web page to collect additional comments from those who were unable to attend an Open House.

The meetings did not have formal presentations. Instead, an open-house format was used where people could come and go any time between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. Participants visited booths focusing on the proposed regulation changes for Smallmouth Bass and Rock Bass under consideration including:

Smallmouth Bass Regulations

- Maintain the existing 12-inch minimum length limit and six (6) fish daily limit on streams (other than Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas).
- Propose to consolidate all Stream Black Bass Special Management Area regulations for smallmouth bass to:
 - 15-inch minimum length limit and
 - One (1) fish per day creel limit
 - Areas to be known as Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas

Proposed New and Expanded Special Management Areas

- Create a new Smallmouth Bass Special Management Area on the Current River.
- Expand the boundaries of the Jacks Fork, Big Piney, Meramec and Big River Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas

Rock Bass Regulations

- Maintain Rock Bass Special Management Areas, except for Osage Fort of Gasconade River.
- Propose a statewide Rock Bass minimum length limit of seven (7) inches.

Open Houses were held at the following locations:

- September 29 – Van Buren
The River Centre at The Landing, 110 E. Carter Street
- October 1 – Blue Springs
Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center, 1401 N.W. Park Road
- October 5 – St. Robert
St. Robert Community Center, 114 J.H. Williamson Drive
- October 6 – Farmington
Memorial United Methodist Church, 425 North Street
- October 8 – Kirkwood

- Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center, 11715 Cragwold Road
- October 13 – Springfield
Springfield Conservation Nature Center, 4601 S. Nature Center Way
- October 15 – Neosho
National Fish Hatchery, 520 Park Street
- October 19 – Columbia
Missouri Department of Conservation Central Regional Office and Conservation Research Center, 3500 E. Gans Road

THEMES AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED AT OPEN HOUSES

Public comments were collected at Open Houses, conducted September 29-October 19, 2015. A brief summary of the public comments provided at the Open Houses can be found below. These comments are not votes, but help the Department to understand themes and issues from the comments provided at the Open Houses. The themes are listed in the order that received the most comments. For example, those in favor of the possible regulation changes received the most comments; followed by support for increasing the Smallmouth Bass length limit to 18 inches; then support for having a 15-inch statewide Smallmouth Bass length limit and increasing the Rock Bass length limit to eight (8) inches statewide. A complete list of comments received is provided in Appendix A.

Support for all regulation changes which include Smallmouth Bass and Rock Bass regulations changes and proposed new and expanded special management areas.

- Support proposed regulation changes

Sample of Comments for Support for the Proposed Regulation Changes for both Smallmouth Bass and Rock Bass

I was shocked at the amount of time it takes a smallmouth to develop therefore I am in support of the proposed changes.
I feel this is the fairest regulation for all anglers
I support the proposed regulation changes. I would like to see smallmouth bass grow to larger sizes to improve fishing opportunities.
I fully support the new regulations. Excellent work MDC! Keep it up! Thanks also for hosting these public forums.

- Support a Smallmouth Bass 18–inch Minimum Length Limit

Sample of Comments Supporting a Smallmouth Bass 18-Inch Minimum Length Limit

Leave smallmouth trophy area 18"

I understand the mortality issue for smallmouth, but would like to see 18" regulations in at least a couple of the managed areas with a statewide 15" if possible.
I think there should still be 18" minimum on some management areas.
Please keep 18" minimum on Jacks Fork

- Support a Smallmouth Bass 15–inch Minimum Length Limit

Sample of Comments Supporting a Smallmouth Bass 15-Inch Minimum Length Limit

Would like to see statewide 15"-1 limit someday.
I like the additional 112 miles of SMA and agree standardizing the 15" / 1 fish per day limit.
Would like statewide regulations on smallmouth to 15" and 1 fish per day creel limit.
I would like to see 15" minimum length for all streams.

- Support a Rock Bass Eight (8)–inch Minimum Length Limit

Sample of Comments Supporting a Rock Bass Eight (8)-Inch Minimum Length Limit

Personally would like to see an 8" regulation on rock bass in all managed areas.
I'd say go with 8" everywhere and let's see if we get more decent quality fish.
Raise the goggle eye length limit on the Gasconade River to 8 "in the same as the Current length limit on the Big Piney.
I want the 8" goggle eye on the Big Piney to be added to the Gasconade River area.

COMMENTS FOR THE PROPOSED REGULATION CHANGES FOR SMALLMOUTH BASS AND ROCK BASS UNDER CONSIDERATION

Maintain the existing 12-inch minimum length limit and six (6) fish daily limit on streams (other than Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas)

- Support the existing 12-inch minimum length limit and six (6) fish daily limit on streams
- Support an increased length limit
- Support a decreased daily limit of six (6) fish

Sample of Comments for Maintaining the 12-Inch Minimum Length Limit and Six (6) Fish Daily Limit on Streams

Anything to limit a harvestable smallmouth
It's an improvement.
I support all these regulations. Would like to see statewide 15"-1 limit someday. Thanks for all you do.

...I would like to see more regulation for smallmouth less than 6 limit, increase length limit on smaller wadable waters, the potential is there because I experienced it over 30 years ago. I own 1 mile frontage on the upper James and water quality habitat is good. The numbers and size of fish just aren't there anymore...

Why SIX 12" fish as a statewide standard for smallies?? Seems like a lot. And consider that people who are meat-fishing for bass are likely to be using live bait. So by the time they catch their six 12" smallies how many small fish have been gut-hooked and killed?

I would like to see 15" minimum length for all streams. Also eliminate use of bait on some areas

Consolidate All Stream Black Bass Special Management Area Regulations for Smallmouth Bass to:

- **15-inch minimum length limit and**
 - **One (1) fish per day creel limit**
 - **Areas to be known as Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas**
- Support the consolidation of all Black Bass Special Management Area regulations
 - Support a more restrictive Black Bass Special Management Area regulations

Sample of Comments for Consolidation of All Stream Black Bass Special Management Area Regulations for Smallmouth Bass

Expand special regs on sections of streams that have the capacity to produce larger smallmouth. Use special permits to please a wide variety of anglers.

I would like to see 15" minimum length for all streams. Also eliminate use of bait on some areas. I think there should still be 18" minimum on some management areas.

I like the additional 112 miles of SMA and agree standardizing the 15" / 1 fish per day limit. Giving up the 18" / 1 fish per day limit in exchange for the 112 additional SMA miles okay as well. Too bad 12" / 6 fish per day limit is still the statewide Regulation. Missouri smallmouth fishes statewide would be better if 14"/3 fish per day limit was implemented as the state reg..

Leave smallmouth trophy area 18"

Create a New Smallmouth Bass Special Management Area on the Current River

- Support the creation of the Smallmouth Bass Special Management Area on the Current River
- Support a larger expansion of the Smallmouth Bass Special Management Area on the Current River.
- Support the creation of Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas in other locations

Sample Comments Regarding the Creation of the New Smallmouth Bass Special Management Area on the Current River

Definitely LOVE adding proposed trophy area on the Current River...
I support the proposed regs changes and would like to see you expand the Current River SMA all the way to Round Spring
Expanded special regs on sections of streams that have the capacity to produce larger smallmouth. Use special permits to please a wide variety of anglers.

Expand the Boundaries of the Jacks Fork, Big Piney, Meramec and Big River Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas

- Support expanding regarding expanding the boundaries of the Jacks Fork, Big Piney, Meramec and Big River Smallmouth Bass management areas
- Support a longer length limit of Smallmouth Bass

Sample Comments Regarding Expanding the Boundaries of the Jacks Fork, Big Piney, Meramec and Big River Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas

It's an improvement. Need more trophy area. Decrease limits
Please keep 18" minimum on Jacks Fork and strongly consider reducing creel limit of 6 bass in the near future and please don't "promote" live bait fishing on your Find MO Fishing App
...I'm all for the one 15" fish in trophy sections but I'm not convinced the trophy area on the Piney has led to more & bigger fish like it's supposed to for whatever reason. Sections are too small and get fished hard. How about categorizing smallmouth streams as white, red or blue ribbon? Or sections of river with different 'ribbon' designations? Better yet, entire rivers, not sections. If MO streams are managed for trophy fishing, then they will need to be protected as such, which means more agents on the water. Get the smallmouth clubs involved, just like the trout clubs, and the word will spread. MO has something many states would love to have. This needs to be taken seriously.
...Expand the smallmouth management area into the Big Piney River making the first six up to 21 miles to Blue Spring or East Gate of Fort Leonard Wood 18 inch smallmouth bass limit keeping 1 fish per day.
Consider keeping 18 inches on upper section of Jack's Fork...

Statewide Rock Bass Seven (7)-Inch Minimum Length Limit

- Support the proposed statewide Rock Bass seven (7)-inch minimum length limit
- Support a statewide Rock Bass eight (8)-inch minimum length limit

Sample of Comments for a Rock Bass Seven (7)-inch Minimum Length Limit

Agree with statewide rock bass minimum length limit of 7...

Goggle reg is great

1) In my mind the goggle-eye fishery in the Piney decline-we haven't caught many at all in recent years. Seems like last 2-3 years we don't catch goggle-eye anything like we used to on the Piney. I have no doubt at all that goggle-eye are overharvested. We used to think we couldn't over-harvest crappie, but we learned differently. I think it the same for goggle-eye. 2) A 7" goggle eye limit is ridiculous. Isn't that about the minimum you'd want for an eat-able fish?? Does a limit that small really get us anywhere-in-other words-are there really a lot of people out there catching and keeping sub-7 inches fish now? I'd say go with 8" everywhere and let's see if we get more decent quality fish.

8 inch minimum on goggle eye statewide and close season during winter

ADDITIONAL THEMES AND ISSUES

Additional themes and issues surfaced through the Open House comments (see Appendix A for the full list of Open House comments). These themes include discussion of fishing tournaments, catch and release, more Smallmouth Bass regulation suggestions, and miscellaneous comments. Listed below are the additional themes with the most common issues listed below the theme.

Tournaments

- Tournaments take too many fish out of the stream
- Tournament fishing is important
- Fishing is better than ever because of tournaments

Catch and Release

- Support catch and release fishing
- Catch and release all species of fish

More Smallmouth Bass Regulation

- Lower the daily limit of Smallmouth Bass to less than six (6)
- Increase length limit on smaller wadable waters
- Expand special regulations on sections of streams that have the capacity to produce larger Smallmouth Bass
- Use special permits to please a wide variety of anglers

Miscellaneous Comments

- Smallmouth Bass fishing is better now than in 1978
- Eliminate the use of bait on some areas
- Support statewide regulations on Smallmouth Bass of 15 inches minimum length limit and one (1) fish per day creel limit
- Categorize streams as white, red or blue ribbon

- Put more agents on the river
- Add more Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas

Sample of Additional Themes and Issues Comments

Anything that will harm tournament fishing will be harmful and I am absolutely opposed!
Keep taking our rights. One thing leads to another. There is a lot of bass. No tournaments any more. My kids love to eat bass, I may keep 3 limits yearly. If anything maybe 14" limit on smallmouth. I can show you a coworker with a rock with at least 4 over 20" under it. I don't think the trophy will make it any better, there's already a lot of fish.
I feel the approach you are suggesting is not the answer to having more fish and bigger fish. Making on fish limit is not the answer. Putting a 15 inch limit is not the answer to having bigger fish. We need to monitor the amount of fish being taken from our rivers. Tournament fishing has helped the growth rate of fish becoming mature than anything that has been implemented. These tournament fishermen are releasing all big fish now than ever before. As a whole our streams have a supply and population
I am a catch and release fisherman regardless of species. I was shocked at the amount of time it takes a smallmouth to develop therefore I am in support of the proposed changes
Catch & Release for stream smallmouth. Reduce other population greatly.
Leave smallmouth trophy area 18"
Been floating and fishing since 1978 and the fishing has gotten better for smallmouth not as good for largemouth-thanks
Consider keeping 18 inches on upper section of Jacks Fork; Consider keeping 18 inches on existing section of the Gasconade River; extend 15 inch/1 smb limit on Huzzah to Harper Slab; extend 15 inch/1 smb limit on the Courtois to Hwy 8 Bridge; Extend 15 inch/1 smb limit on Gasconade upstream to Hazel Green Access
Should leave it alone; you will not help out unless you put more agents on the river and control what's going on. The river from Round Springs up to Mouth should be a trophy area?
Lower the daily limit to less fish than "6"! Or reduce bait fishing to improve the overall fishing on certain creeks
I would like to see 15" minimum length for all streams. Also eliminate use of bait on some areas. I think there should still be 18" minimum on some management areas.
It's an improvement. Need more trophy area. Decrease limits
Definitely LOVE adding proposed trophy area on the Current River. Please keep 18" minimum on Jacks Fork and strongly consider reducing creel limit of 6 bass in the near future and please don't "promote" live bait fishing on your Find MO Fishing App
I support all these regulations. Would like to see statewide 15"-1 limit someday. Thanks for all you do.

1) In my mind the goggle-eye fishery in the Piney decline-we haven't caught many at all in recent years. Seems like last 2-3 years we don't catch goggle-eye anything like we used to on the Piney. I have no doubt at all that goggle-eye are overharvested. we used to think we couldn't over-harvest crappie, but we learned differently. I think it the same for goggle-eye. 2) A 7" goggle eye limit is ridiculous. Isn't that about the minimum you'd want for an eat-able fish?? Does a limit that small really get us anywhere-in-other words-are there really a lot of people out there catching and keeping sub-7 inch fish now? I'd say go with 8" everywhere and let's see if we get more decent quality fish. 3) Ozark streams are world class fisheries, hug economic impact if advertised/marketed as such, but must be managed that way. Folks love MO/AR trout, so why not smallies? 4) I don't know how can you can accurately assess river smallie populations. I mean what % do they get by electroshocking? Appears different sampling techniques will yield varying results. Unless incorporating multiple sampling methods, then accuracy seems debatable. 5) Why SIX 12" fish as a statewide standard for smallies?? Seems like a lot. And consider that people who are meat-fishing for bass are likely to be using live bait. So by the time they catch their six 12" smallies how many small fish have been gut-hooked and killed? 6) I'm all for the one 15" fish in trophy sections but I'm not convinced the trophy area on the Piney has led to more & bigger fish like it's supposed to for whatever reason. Sections are too small and get fished hard. 7) How about categorizing smallmouth streams as white, red or blue ribbon? Or sections of river with different 'ribbon' designations? Better yet, entire rivers, not sections. 8) If MO streams are managed for trophy fishing, then they will need to be protected as such, which means more agents on the water. Get the smallmouth clubs involved, just like the trout clubs, and the word will spread. MO has something many states would love to have. This needs to be taken seriously.

ONLINE OPEN HOUSE

ONLINE OPEN HOUSE SUMMARY

For those who could not attend an Open House, the Department set up an Online Open House, which allowed citizens to access everything that was available at the eight Open Houses across the state. Online comments were collected September 1-October 31, 2015 at <http://mdc.mo.gov/node/9092>. Over 341 online comments were received from over 190 respondents during this time frame.

The Open House handouts are found in Appendix D.

THEMES AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED THROUGH ONLINE OPEN HOUSE

A brief summary of comments provided through the Online Open House can be found below. These comments are not votes, but help the Department to understand themes and issues from the comments provided online. The themes are listed in the order that received the most comments. For example, folks in favor of the possible regulation changes received the most comments, followed by support for having a 15-inch statewide Smallmouth Bass minimum length limit, increasing the Rock Bass minimum length limit to eight inches statewide and increasing the amount of agents/enforcement in the field. Issues for each theme are summarized and sample comments (that best explained the theme) are provided. A complete list of comments received is provided in Appendix B.

Support for all regulation changes which include Smallmouth Bass and Rock Bass regulations changes and proposed new and expanded management areas

- Support proposed regulations changes

Sample of Comments for Regulation Changes for both Smallmouth Bass and Rock Bass

I support all proposals that will ensure/enhance healthy populations.
I strongly support the proposed regulation changes for both the small mouth bass special management areas and for the rock bass statewide.
Length and creel limits on these two species must be passed as soon as possible. Current regulations are much too lenient on most Ozark streams.
I am from Missouri and have fished the rivers and streams for over 50 years. I am in full support of the proposed new regulations. Thank you for your efforts.

... I support any science-based regulations that increase the general quality (size and relative abundance) of both the smallmouth and rock bass fisheries (largemouth and spotted bass too)...

- Support a Smallmouth Bass 15–inch Minimum Length Limit

Sample of Comments Supporting 15-Inch Minimum Length Limit for Smallmouth Bass

To sum up my comments, I would like to say that I am firmly not in support of the removal of 18” minimum length limits in favor of 15” limits.

I would love to see the 15 inch limit expanded to a few more of the creeks.

I think there should be a state wide Black Bass size limit of 15 inches at least...

I think it would be a great idea to have a statewide minimum length limit of 8 inches for rock bass and 15 on all Smallmouths

- Support a Rock Bass Eight (8)–inch Minimum Length Limit

Sample of Comments Supporting Eight (8)-Inch Minimum Length Limit for Rock Bass

Increase rock bass minimum length to 8 inches statewide.

I would love to see the length of... Goggle eye to 8" not the seven inches talked about at MDC

I would be happy with the 8 inch minimum or even 7 and a half.

State wide Rock Bass 8" and limit 8.

- Support the Increase of Enforcement by Conservation Agents

Sample of Comments Supporting the Increase of Enforcement by Conservation Agents

In my experience the ability of many Ozark streams to produce quality fish would be greatly enhanced by stricter harvest regulations and enforcement.

I think MDC could help with diminishing numbers particularly in the Niangua river system and I'm sure this would apply with several other rivers in the state would be to put more agents in the field by special task force or whatever, to control the illegal harvesting of these species during the gigging season, or make the penalties stiffer.

I would love to see sting operations and enforcement check points similar to those conducted by the MDC during firearms deer season and spring turkey season as a means letting the unethical outdoorsmen know that they are being watched and that gigging smallmouth and other game fish is not tolerated and not going to be dealt with lightly anymore.

We can change the regulations and improve things considerably but the only way to truly help our Smallmouth Bass populations is strict enforcement of length/possession limits and illegal gigging/poaching.

COMMENTS FOR THE PROPOSED REGULATION CHANGES FOR SMALLMOUTH BASS AND ROCK BASS UNDER CONSIDERATION

Smallmouth Bass

Maintain the existing 12-inch minimum length limit and daily limit of six (6) fish for Smallmouth Bass on streams (other than Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas)

- Support the existing 12-inch minimum length limit and daily limit of six (6) fish for Smallmouth Bass on streams
- Support an increased length limit
- Support decreasing the current six (6) fish daily limit

Sample of Comments for Maintaining the Existing Minimum Length Limit of 12 Inches and Daily Limit of Six (6) Fish for Smallmouth Bass on Streams

I wanted to thank you for your Open House Oct 8 at Powder Valley, it was informative and I had a chance to voice my opinion. I believed the regulations will help the smallmouth bass and rock bass to increase their numbers and bigger fish.
I think it would be a great idea to have a statewide minimum length limit of 8 inches for rock bass and 15 on all Smallmouths...
. I am not in favor of maintaining the 12" 6 fish limit on smallmouth bass statewide. More restrictive limits might improve the fishing on small creeks that see a lot of pressure. Water should be managed based on the size of the stream and the quality of the habitat, not by a one size fits all approach.
I can't believe with the smallmouth's slow growth rate, anglers can keep 6 fish as a daily limit! I also believe 12 inches is too short and should go up. I'm an avid angler but if people want to have a fish fry, go buy it at the store, or target a species that mdc stocks for put and take. Walleye, trout, spoonbill, etc.!
Thanks for taking special interest in these 2 game fish species. A 7 inch and daily limit of 12 rock bass and a 12 inch with a daily limit of 5 on smallmouth would be my choice if my voice could be heard
Keep 12 inch minimum in all streams but reduce possession to 4 daily.

Smallmouth Bass

Consolidate All Stream Black Bass Special Management Area Regulations for Smallmouth Bass to:

-15-inch minimum length limit and

-One (1) fish per day creel limit

-Areas to be known as Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas

- Support the consolidation of all black bass special management area regulations
- Support more restrictive black bass special management area regulations

Sample of Comments for Consolidation of all Stream Black Bass Special Management Area Regulations for Smallmouth Bass

I strongly support the proposed regulation changes for both the small mouth bass special management areas and for the rock bass statewide.
I fully support the expansion of smallmouth bass special management areas...
I strongly support the proposed changes to Smallmouth and Rock Bass Special Management Areas. These proposals are certainly a big step in the right direction and I support quickly passing these regulations into law and implementation ASAP.
All streams, creeks and rivers should be fall under the proposed regulations for Black Bass Special Management Areas - Only one fish limit and fish must be over 15".
I am in favor of making all Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas require an 18-inch minimum length limit with a one (1) fish per day creel limit. I am in favor of all of the proposed new or expanded Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas.
State wide Rock Bass 8" and limit 8. State wide Smallmouth 16" and limit 1, easy to remember. Most fishermen are not keeping Smallmouth anyway unless it is a trophy size and they want to "show it off" by mounting it or getting their photo taken.
Also I am for a change on the special management areas but I think it should be 18in and 1 fish across all special management areas.

Smallmouth Bass

Create a New Smallmouth Bass Special Management Area on the Current River

- Support the creation of the Smallmouth Bass Special Management Area on the Current River
- Support the larger expansion of the Smallmouth Bass Special Management Area on the Current River
- Support the current regulation on the Current River

Sample Comments Regarding the Creation of the new Smallmouth Bass Management Area on the Current River

Would love to see special units on the Current River. I have noticed a decline in the fishing. I have fished it for 16 years and have never kept one fish.
The Current River SMBSMA is a great idea!
Extend upstream limit of proposed Current River area to lower Round Spring access - already a recognized boundary by boaters relative to seasonal horsepower restrictions.
Current River: I suggest extending the upper end of the special management area to HWY 19 and maintaining the 1/18 limit of the current SBSMA.
I would like to voice my opposition to the proposed Current River Smallmouth Special Management Area. There currently are several bass tournaments held on the Current River, the proposed expansion of the Special Management areas would eliminate these events and cost the

cities of Van Buren and Doniphan the money these sportsmen spend in the communities. I support extending the late youth season. This would provide more opportunities for the next generation of hunters

I've been fishing Current River - a roughly 30-mile stretch above and below Van Buren - for more than 50 years, almost exclusively for smallmouth. In my opinion, the smallmouth fishery in that section of river is healthier now than at any time in my memory.

Smallmouth Bass

Expand the boundaries of the Jacks Fork, Big Piney, Meramec and Big River Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas

- Support expanding regarding the boundaries of the Jacks Fork, Big Piney, Meramec and Big River Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas
- Support a longer Smallmouth Bass minimum length limit
- Support the current regulations

Sample of Comments Regarding Expanding the Boundaries of the Jacks Fork, Big Piney, Meramec and Big River Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas

I fished the Jacks Fork last week in the smallmouth special management area. I caught a lot of big fish including an 18 incher. All total I caught 7 or 8 over 15 inches. I don't think these fish would be there if not for the current 18" regulation. Please don't change this!

Jacks Fork: Extending the SBSMA down to Two Rivers is a no brainer, I suggest doing this and maintaining the 1/18 limit of the current SBSMA. **Big Piney:** Extending the SBSMA down to the confluence is also a good idea. I suggest a continuous area through the fort as well as maintaining the 1/18 limit of the current SBSMA. **Meramec:** In my opinion this river's fishery needs the greatest protection and has the greatest opportunity for improvement. It's very disheartening to fish the incredible habitat of the middle river and have a hard time catching anything better than 12-13 inches.

I propose you keep the Small Mouth Bass 18 inch Special Management Area in Pulaski County (From Riddle Bridge to Highway D in Phelps County), I also propose the expansion of the Special Management Area for smallmouth bass (18 inch limit) from the confluence of the Big Piney (85.7) and Gasconade River up into the Big Piney river to the Shanghai Spring (78.9 mile) or east gate of Fort Leonard wood (66.5 mile) of the Big Piney River. This would make a fantastic Smallmouth Bass fishing area for the state and would bring in anglers from other states. St Robert MO has approximately 1600 hotel rooms to support tourism in the area.

Currently you (MDC) have made most of Jacks Fork a special management river and if it has improved that fishery I would like to know how. I can't tell it is any better than it was 30 years ago. I don't see how limiting current river to 1 fish over 15" will improve the fishery there either.

I feel you should leave the eighteen inch length limit on Smallmouth in The Jacks Fork. It is my favorite fishing location because of the abundance of big Smallmouth. It is working so please don't fix it!

The new Big Piney expansion proposal would add an additional 31 miles of special management, most importantly including the entire approximate 40 miles of the Big Piney flowing through Pulaski County. In my opinion, this is totally unfair to the majority of what I would call ‘family fisherman’, who over generations have fished and taught sons & daughters, grandkids, and friends to enjoy harvesting fish within the rules by catching, handling, cleaning and eating at the ‘family fish fry’.

Rock Bass

- Support the proposed change of a statewide seven (7)-inch minimum length limit
- Support the current regulation of no length limit, except where exemptions occur
- Support a statewide eight (8)-inch minimum length limit

Sample of Comments for Rock Bass Minimum Length Limit of Seven (7) Inches

Go MDC. I think this is excellent. Want to see my grandkids enjoy some better quality stream fishing. Long time creek fisherman and have seen too many blatant abuses by folks keeping numerous small goggle eye.

...And all goggle eye should have to be at least 8 inches in length. This will help to ensure that our rivers do not get depleted of game fish too quickly before they have time to grow.

I do not want the length limits to be set at 7-inches on goggle eye. We have 3 grandchildren. It's hard for them to catch anything but perch. However, they can get a few goggle eye. We travel for over 3 hours to go to Big Sugar, Little Sugar and the Elk River. Gasoline is expensive; the camping fees are about \$25-\$30 a night. Now you want to increase the length limit, so we can't even catch a limit of fish for a fish fry on the camping trip. A 7-inch goggle eye is really big. We do catch some that long. I think that big is just too big. It also means, we must stop and measure each one before stringing it... There are lots and lots of goggle eye, but not 7-inch ones. Please reconsider the lengths.

Have fished Big Sugar Creek in McDonald County for over 50 years. I fish for small mouth and goggle eye. We need a simple rule for both. Small mouth limit of 2 fish daily of 15 inches or longer and goggle eye limit of 10 fish 8 inches or longer. These rules should apply to all waters in Missouri. "KISS" Keep it simple---does not matter what stream or body of water--This will assure compliance and give the fish a chance to mature.

I am not really in favor of the 7" length limit on goggle eye, especially if the change will have little statistical change in population other than harvest size. Each additional regulation diminishes the quality of the experience, be it ever so slight. It's just one more point where there is a fine line between legal and not, making a precise measurement. It's a nuisance and if it has to be done to preserve the species, and then let it be so... Please make a decision that is biological in nature rather than people-pleasing. If you do this I will be satisfied with what changes are made.

In the "good old days" MDC used common sense and science, made unbiased reasonable decisions and rules without public input, and people accepted that MDC was doing the right thing. I am in favor of the old fashioned way

ADDITIONAL THEMES AND ISSUES

Additional themes and issues surfaced through the online comments. These themes include catch and release fishing, gigging, enforcement of regulations, concerns about tournaments, slot limits, river otters, and several miscellaneous comments. Listed below are the additional themes with the most common issues listed below the theme.

Catch and Release

- Support catch and release fishing

Gigging

- Support the idea that illegal gigging of Smallmouth Bass is problematic

Enforcement

- Support the need for more enforcement on the streams

Tournaments

- One fish limit will deter tournament fishermen and cities will lose money

Slot Limits

- Support slot limits

River Otters

- Support the thought that low Smallmouth Bass numbers are caused by river otters

Miscellaneous Comments

- Support adding streams to the proposed management areas
- Support simplifying regulations
- Support closing Smallmouth Bass and Rock Bass fishing in the winter
- Support and appreciate the Missouri Department of Conservation's efforts

Sample of Miscellaneous Comments

I practice catch and release and have passed this practice on to my son and grandsons.
I practice catch and release on rock and smallmouth bass. Anything you can do to increase my catch of larger fish I support.
Hundreds or thousands of low impact catch and release anglers have less impact on the fish population than a few fishermen compelled to keep the limit each trip, and yet the regulations cater to the consumptive users.
Smallmouth bass are there to catch and release not to eat

<p>I would love to see catch and release on all smallmouth bass in all streams statewide.</p>
<p>Many Anglers catch and release but do a lot of damage.</p>
<p>I would like to see the current gigging season shortened and more stringent enforcement of our state's current gigging laws. I believe that the MDC could do MUCH more to curtail the problem of the illegal harvesting of game fish that takes place on some of our state's best smallmouth fisheries in the fall and winter months.</p>
<p>The biggest issues I currently see are illegal gigging of smallmouth and over-harvest/poaching. We can change the regulations and improve things considerably but the only way to truly help our Smallmouth Bass populations is strict enforcement of length/possession limits and illegal gigging/poaching. I dread this time of year when gigging season opens and our precious Smallmouth start getting stuck. I urge the MDC to be more proactive in fighting the illegal gigging that is taking place year after year.</p>
<p>I don't really see the need for changes in regulations. The regulations should be fine IF they were enforced. What good would any regulation changes be if the degree of enforcement remains as it is?</p>
<p>I personally would be in favor of keeping the regulations the same and ENFORCING THEM. Words on websites and on pamphlets do nothing to help our fisheries unless those words are backed up with some action that involves getting out of the air conditioned trucks.</p>
<p>I would propose a slot length.</p>
<p>I think there needs to be a slot limit on smallmouth. Keep 5 - 14 inch and under, none between 15-18 and one over 18 (even though I think an 18 inch is a trophy size in Ozark streams)</p>
<p>By utilizing a statewide 14-18" slot limit with a creel limit of 3-4 fish, the state would be able to simplify the regulations while appeasing the catch and keep, trophy anglers, and catch and release fisherman.</p>
<p>I would love to see a slot limit that protects all 12-20" fish</p>
<p>Can't understand why you didn't add Bryant, Upper North Fork about Hammond, Beaver Creek especially below Bradleyville, Bull Crk, Upper 11pt, Upper Current and others.</p>
<p>15" length limit on smallmouth bass is great however an one fish limit is simply silly. Our lakes such as Table Rock Lake and Stockton Lake have a great smallmouth population and tournament fishermen such as myself rely on the smallmouth species at certain times of the year. I would like to voice my opposition to the proposed Current River Smallmouth Special Management Area. There currently are several bass tournaments held on the Current River, the proposed expansion of the Special Management areas would eliminate these events and cost the cities of Van Buren and Doniphan the money these sportsmen spend in the communities.</p>
<p>Don't you think it's because of the otters you all turned loose in the rivers? You can't catch a goggle eye in the Niangua River. However, there are lots of otters running up and down the banks. It's ruined.</p>
<p>Human populations and related anthropomorphic stressors are increasing, otters are re-established, and climate change impacts (which will likely include more extremes of flow and</p>

temperature) make the world of a Smallmouth harder to survive in than ever, and we should respond by increased protection.

The Big and Little Niangua Rivers need to be included in the special management areas for smallmouth and goggle eye.

We need a simple rule for both. Small mouth limit of 2 fish daily of 15 inches or longer and goggle eye limit of 10 fish 8 inches or longer. These rules should apply to all waters in Missouri. "KISS" Keep it simple, does not matter what stream or body of water. This will assure compliance and give the fish a chance to mature.

I fish for small mouth and goggle eye. We need a simple rule for both. I appreciate the MDC's efforts to improve the smallmouth and rock bass fishing in our state; as well as the opportunity to voice opinions and concerns about the way our smallmouth and rock bass fisheries are currently being managed.

I think MDC does an excellent job watching over our great outdoor resources.

COMMENTS RECEIVED DIRECTLY (via mail or phone call)

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED DIRECTLY

These comments came from the Department offices throughout the state Regulations Committee or Department website via mail, email, or through telephone conversations. The full list of comments is found in Appendix C.

THEMES AND ISSUES IDENTIFIED THROUGH COMMENTS RECEIVED DIRECTLY

As with the Open House and online comments, the themes are listed in the order that received the most comments.

Smallmouth Bass

Expand Special Management Areas

- Support the proposed expansion of the special management areas
- Support further expansion of special management areas than those that were proposed
- Support a smaller special management area

Sample Expanded Special Management Area Comments

I am okay with the all Stream Black Bass Special Management Area regulation for smallmouth.
I concur with the proposed regulation change as listed on the MDC website
I propose you keep the Small Mouth Bass 18 inch Special Management Area in Pulaski County (From Riddle Bridge to Highway D in Phelps County). I also propose the expansion of the Special Management Area for small mouth bass (18 inch limit) from the confluence of the Big Piney and Gasconade River mile marker (85.7) up into the Big Piney River to the Shanghai Spring (78.9 mile) or east gate of Fort Leonard Wood (66.5 mile) of the big Piney River. This would make a world class Small Mouth Bass fishing area for the state and would bring in anglers in to Missouri from other states.
I attended the local Spfld meeting last night. I was impressed with the #'s of MDC employees present and the quality of participating staff. My biggest concern with the proposed changes (smallmouth) is they aren't inclusive enough. Not enough rivers and small streams included. The changes proposed are mostly for already restricted areas, most of which have had less habitat damage from poor river drainage management...Please consider a broader statewide more restrictive regulation.
Establish an trophy smallmouth 18-inch length limit and a one bass creel limit on selected state waters including, lakes, reservoirs, Gasconade River, Osage River tailwater downstream from Bagnell Dam, Current River from mouth of Jacks Fork River to Arkansas border, Meramec

River, Stockton River tailwater downstream from Stockton Reservoir, Table Rock Reservoir, Stockton Reservoir, and Lake of the Ozarks.

I just came from the first meeting at the River Centre, Van Buren, MO... I fish the area of the proposed smallmouth management area regularly. There is a very healthy population of smallmouth in this stretch. I fear that there will become an over-abundance of sub-lethal (15") fish in this stretch. Stop the management area @ the confluence of Jacks Fork and Current. If down the road, it needs to be extended, then do it, but not now!

As the owner of Boiling Spring Campground I see your proposed regulation change negatively impacting small business in Pulaski County. Pulaski County currently has 8 Outfitter that support anglers in the Special Management area.

Smallmouth Bass Regulations

- Support the proposed regulations
- Support a more restrictive regulation (larger length limit and smaller creel limit)

Sample Smallmouth Bass Comments

I concur with the proposed regulation change as listed on the MDC website

I've wanted a 15" limit / 3 fish per day for 23 years. The meet and greet on Oct. 8 was a great idea. Thanks so much.

Establish a 15-inch statewide length limit and a two bass creel limit for smallmouth bass in all state waters including streams, large rivers, reservoirs, and tailwaters,

The smallmouth length limit of 12" is not enough.

Rock Bass Regulations

- Support the proposed statewide seven (7)-inch minimum length limit
- Support an eight (8)-inch minimum length limit

Sample of Rock Bass Comments

I concur with the proposed regulation change as listed on the MDC website

Rock bass 7" is good, lower limit too!

Goggle eye-set the limit @8" and the possession limit @10. It's proven that the 8" limit is working on the Eleven Point.

I also recommend in my proposed expanded Special Management area in Pulaski County making the goggle eye (Rock Bass) length limit 8 inches. So we would have both a world class Small Mouth Bass and Rock Bass fishing area for the state of Missouri.

I also recommend in my proposed expanded Special Management area in Pulaski County making the goggle eye (Rock Bass) length limit 8 inches. So we would have both a world class Small Mouth Bass and Rock Bass fishing area for the state of Missouri. As the owner of Boiling Spring

Campground I see your proposed regulation change negatively impacting small business in Pulaski County. Pulaski County currently has 8 Outfitter that support anglers in the Special Management area.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Open House Comments

Appendix B. Online Comments

Appendix C. Comments that Came to the Department Offices, Ombudsman, Regulations Committee or the Department Website from September 1, 2015-October 31, 2015

Appendix D. Open House Handouts

Appendix A. Open House Comments

<p>I support all of the proposed regulations.</p>
<p>Expanded special regs on sections of streams that have the capacity to produce larger smallmouth. Use special permits to please a wide variety of anglers.</p>
<p>Lower the daily limit to less fish than "6"! Or reduce bait fishing to improve the overall fishing on certain creeks</p>
<p>Very informational and well organized. My husband brought me this evening and I will use these materials in our homeschool.</p>
<p>Anything to limit a harvestable smallmouth.</p>
<p>Goggle reg is great, I would like to see more regulation for smallmouth less than 6 limit, increase length limit on smaller wadable waters, the potential is there because I experienced it over 30 years ago. I own 1 mile frontage on the upper James and water quality habitat is good. The numbers and size of fish just aren't there anymore. We have water 3-6' deep, some bluff holes 6-8 feet deep and the riffles never dry up.</p>
<p>Been floating and fishing since 1978 and the fishing has gotten better for smallmouth not as good for largemouth-thanks</p>
<p>Will do online</p>
<p>Catch & Release for stream smallmouth. Reduce other population greatly. This meeting much too controlled. I will not attend another in this fashion.</p>
<p>Leave smallmouth trophy area 18"</p>
<p>I have fished a segment of Big Piney River for 50+ years and I suggest that smallmouth and goggle-eye be made catch & release until size classes increase.</p>
<p>Agrees with statewide rock bass minimum length limit of 7". Would like statewide regulations on smallmouth to 15" and 1 fish per day creel limit.</p>
<p>I like the additional 112 miles of SMA and agree standardizing the 15" / 1 fish per day limit. Giving up the 18" / 1 fish per day limit in exchange for the 112 additional SMA miles okay as well. Too bad 12" / 6 fish per day limit is still the statewide Regulation. Missouri smallmouth fishes statewide would be better if 14"/3 fish per day limit was implemented as the state reg.</p>

<p>I fully support the new regulations. Excellent work MDC! Keep it up! Thanks also for hosting these public forums.</p>
<p>I am in 100% favor of the proposed regulation changes. I feel these should be expanded statewide to all rivers and streams. I also think the Department needs to explore artificial lures only in most areas.</p>
<p>Personally would like to see an 8" regulation on rock bass in all managed areas. I understand the mortality issue for smallmouth, but would like to see 18" regulations in at least a couple of the managed areas with a statewide 15" if possible. If not, the 18" in a couple areas, the other managed areas at 15" and balance of 12" statewide regulations.</p>
<p>Good ideas! Positive change.</p>
<p>I would like to see 15" minimum length for all streams. Also, eliminate use of bait on some areas. I think there should still be 18" minimum on some management areas.</p>
<p>I feel this is the fairest regulation for all anglers.</p>
<p>It's an improvement. Need more trophy area. Decrease limits.</p>
<p>Definitely <u>LOVE</u> adding proposed trophy area on the Current River. Please keep 18" minimum on Jacks Fork and strongly consider reducing creel limit of 6 bass in the near future and please don't "promote" live bait fishing on your Find MO Fishing App.</p>
<p>I support the proposed regulation changes. I would like to see smallmouth bass grow to larger sizes to improve fishing opportunities.</p>
<p>I agree with the goggle eye changes but don't like dropping the length of smallmouth bass to 15"!</p>
<p>All for it</p>
<p>I'm all in favor of better fishing.</p>
<p>Keep the smallmouth at 18 inch in the trophy and make to 6 miles of the Big Piney an 18 inch smallmouth trophy (Devil's Elbow to the mouth of the Gasconade).</p>
<p>I believe want that the smallmouth trophy area should stay at 18" and add 8+ miles of the Big Piney Area. I want the 8" goggle eye on the Big Piney to be added to the Gasconade River area.</p>
<p>Non-concur with dropping smallmouth length limit in special management area on the Gasconade River. The proposal will hurt tourism in Missouri. Recommend the following: 1. *Keep the 18" smallmouth length limit on the Gasconade River (Pulaski County); 2. *Expand the</p>

smallmouth management area into the Big Piney River making the first six up to 21 miles to Blue Spring or East Gate of Fort Leonard Wood 18 inch smallmouth bass limit keeping 1 fish per day. 3.*Raise the goggle eye length limit on the Gasconade River to 8 " in the same as the Current length limit on the Big Piney. If you have questions you can call. There is a map at the end of his comments.

8 inch minimum on goggle eye statewide and close season during winter

I support all these regulations. Would like to see statewide 15"-1 limit someday. Thanks for all you do.

1) In my mind the goggle-eye fishery in the Piney decline-we haven't caught many at all in recent years. Seems like last 2-3 years we don't catch goggle-eye anything like we used to on the Piney. I have no doubt at all that goggle-eye are overharvested. We used to think we couldn't over-harvest crappie, but we learned differently. I think it the same for goggle-eye. 2) A 7" goggle eye limit is ridiculous. Isn't that about the minimum you'd want for an eat-able fish? Does a limit that small really get us anywhere? In-other words, are there really a lot of people out there catching and keeping sub-7 inch fish now? I'd say go with 8" everywhere and let's see if we get more decent quality fish. 3) Ozark streams are world class fisheries, huge economic impact if advertised/marketed as such, but must be managed that way. Folks love MO/AR trout, so why not smallies? 4) I don't know how you can accurately assess river smallie populations. I mean what % do they get by electroshocking? Appears different sampling techniques will yield varying results. Unless incorporating multiple sampling methods, then accuracy seems debatable. 5) Why SIX 12" fish as a statewide standard for smallies? Seems like a lot. And consider that people who are meat-fishing for bass are likely to be using live bait. So by the time they catch their six 12" smallies how many small fish have been gut-hooked and killed? 6) I'm all for the one 15" fish in trophy sections but I'm not convinced the trophy area on the Piney has led to more & bigger fish like it's supposed to for whatever reason. Sections are too small and get fished hard. 7) How about categorizing smallmouth streams as white, red or blue ribbon? Or sections of river with different 'ribbon' designations? Better yet, entire rivers, not sections. 8) If MO streams are managed for trophy fishing, then they will need to be protected as such, which means more agents on the water. Get the smallmouth clubs involved, just like the trout clubs, and the word will spread. MO has something many states would love to have. This needs to be taken seriously.

Yes to it all

Keep taking our rights. One thing leads to another. There is a lot of bass. No tournaments any more. My kids love to eat bass, I may keep 3 limits yearly. If anything maybe 14" limit on smallmouth. I can show you a coworker with a rock with at least 4 over 20" under it. I don't think the trophy will make it any better, there's already a lot of fish.

<p>Anything that will harm tournament fishing will be harmful and I am absolutely opposed!</p>
<p>I am a catch and release fisherman regardless of species. I was shocked at the amount of time it takes a smallmouth to develop, therefore, I am in support of the proposed changes</p>
<p>Should leave it alone; you will not help out unless you put more agents on the river and control what's going on. The river from Round Springs up to Mouth should be a trophy area?</p>
<p>Consider keeping 18 inches on upper section of Jackson Folks; Consider keeping 18 inches on existing section of the Gasconade River; extend 15 inch 1 smb limit on Huzzah to Harper Slab; extend 15 inch/1 smb limit on the Courtois to Hwy 8 Bridge; Extend 15 inch/1 smb limit on Gasconade upstream to Hazel Green Access</p>
<p>I support the proposed regs changes and would like to see you expand the Current River SMA all the way to Round Spring</p>
<p>I feel the approach you are suggesting is not the answer to having more fish and bigger fish. Making one fish limit is not the answer. Putting a 15 inch limit is not the answer to having bigger fish. We need to monitor the amount of fish being taken from our rivers. Tournament fishing has helped the growth rate of fish becoming mature than anything that has been implemented. These tournament fishermen are releasing all big fish now than ever before. As a whole our streams have a supply and population.</p>
<p>I have seen this happen three times in my life and it did not work or benefit me.</p>

Appendix B. Online Comments

I am in favor of the length limit changes as proposed by the MDC. I live close to 10 mile creek where special regulations are in affect BUT, most people that are fishing there, are not aware of the regulations, even those that live close by it. I would also recommend that better informational signs be posted in this area about the regulations for that stretch of the creek.

The time has come to make all Missouri smallmouth river's trophy water, please give all rivers a one 18" fish limit. This comes from someone who fish's the big river or mineral fork at least 10 time a season and hasn't keep a smallmouth in over 30 years. Leave the largemouth and Kentucky bass limit alone.

I would be ok for 8" limit on goggle eye, and 13" on smallmouth. Or even 15" on smallmouth state wide.

I like the idea of a seven inch length limit statewide on Rock Bass. It is simple. I feel you should leave the eighteen inch length limit on Smallmouth in The Jacks Fork. It is my favorite fishing location because of the abundance of big Smallmouth. It is working so please don't fix it!

Length and creel limits on these two species must be passed as soon as possible. Current regulations re much too lenient on most Ozark streams.

I float and fish a lot. I, and all of my fishing friends, wholly support a size limit for goggle-eye. Honestly, it could be 8 or 9 inches and we would be happier. Also, we agree with more regulation on smallmouth. My friends would also like to see smallmouth management areas on, essentially, every river for at least a stretch. There are just too many people keeping small fish, and not enough conservation agents. Thank you

I agree with the summary changes as proposed by MDC on Smallmouth and Rock Bass.

Rock Bass should be at least 8" in length. In parts of Current River they will not average 5" in length. The 12" Smallmouth Bass length is ok but there needs to be more control on the handling of fish at the bass tournaments especially on the Current River.

I know Beaver Creek may not be important, but having grown up on crooked creek in N. Arkansas, I see some similar potential if more enforced protection was installed. But the current limits and seasons are ignored (I have a farm at midpoint and see what is happening). Keep seasons open year round, gigging cleans it out in the winter (thank goodness it gets re stocked from the lake during heavy rains). It might even have year round walleye if they were not cleaned out. I overheard some people bragging in the Taneyville diner about gigging 100 walleye last winter (probably closer to 20 due to exaggeration). Regardless, I would challenge the MDC

to do some shocking this fall above whatever the highest point of the lake was this fall up to Bradleyville to validate this. But back to the focus, smallmouth and goggle eye get cleaned out where they can get boats into. So if the rest of the state is similar regulations may not be the limiting factor. I know on Crooked Creek they watch you like a hawk and 18 to 20 inchers are not uncommon.

If we really want trophy smallmouth how about not fishing them in trophy areas for 5 years. Or only catch and release for 5 years. Then set an 18 in minimum length. Thanks for asking.

Would love to see special units on the current river. I have noticed a decline in the fishing. I have fished it for 16 years and have never kept one fish. Would like to see catch and release areas for sure. The whole state would benefit from management areas. Thanks

I like and agree with the proposed changes.

I made the comment to your fisheries biologist back when the first rock bass limits were placed on the Big Piney (9-inch at that time) that a better idea would be close the season in the winter months. A lot of spring fed areas harbor goggle-eye during this time, and they can feed a lot of Ozarkians in a short period of time. Limit restrictions go out the door when this happens, from stories I have heard. The 8-inch limit was a little more realistic, but not by much. And a 7-inch state wide limit may make some sense. Back when there was a 9-inch limit, and even during the 8-inch period, I talked to many fishermen who liked their skilletts full of goggle-eye. The 9-inch limit made that next to impossible. So, it was ignored by the majority. I never thought that was a good idea, and I would like to see the numbers on how much it helped. The 8-inch limit may have had a few more followers. I doubt it, though. I think a 7-inch limit is more realistic. Would have made more sense way back then. The majority of goggle-eye lost back in those days were due to several years of low rainfall and the enormous explosion of the otter population, in my opinion. Easy access for them to fill their stomachs. They ruined the fishing on some smaller streams, like the Roubidoux. Appreciate all that you do. Just don't always agree. Hope to make it to a meeting. Born and raised on the Big Piney.

I think there needs to be a slot limit on smallmouth. Keep 5 - 14 inch and under, none between 15-18 and one over 18 (even though I think an 18 inch is a trophy size in Ozark streams)

I support the proposed changes. I always practice catch and release for those species.

I fish for smallmouth on current river a couple times a week and sometimes more. Rarely do I ever keep any smallmouth, but some people do and that's fine if that's what they enjoy. Just because I don't keep them doesn't mean I try to impose what I like or think on other people. The river and fish in it are there for everyone to enjoy in whatever way they like. I understand that it must be taken care of and am not against regulations on it for what is best for the river and those who enjoy it. Currently you (MDC) have made most of Jacks Fork a special management river

and if it has improved that fishery I would like to know how. I can't tell it is any better than it was 30 years ago. I don't see how limiting current river to 1 fish over 15" will improve the fishery there either. I am ok with a 6 fish limit on that river but would like to see only 1 fish over 15 inches with the same on Current river. Most people that I know that frequently catch more than one 15" fish in a day don't keep them anyway. When I see more than one 15" fish kept is usually early in season when the bass spawn late and are very concentrated. Also, I fish catch and release smallmouth tournaments out of Van Buren and Doniphan, if MDC decides to make a one fish 15" or longer limit on Current river would there be an exception for a bonafide catch and release tournament?

Speaking for myself, I personally would not find an 8 inch length limit on Rockbass to be out of line the numbers of quality fish here in Lawrence County have fallen off drastically in the last 5 to 7 years, especially in Turnback Creek. On smallmouth bass I think a daily limit of 4 is plenty anywhere in the state. Turnback Creek in Lawrence County has a nice population of Smallmouth but having said that it is rare to catch one over 15 inches, I am not sure why. I fish the Hootentown Access South of Nixa MO and catch quality Smallmouth almost every trip. A few over the years have reached the 5 lb. range and the Hootentown Access also has a nice population of Rockbass of quality size. I think there needs to be an increase in length limits and daily possession limits need reduced to help protect our waters for generations to come. I practice catch and release and have passed this practice on to my son and grandsons.

I can't believe with the smallmouth's slow growth rate, anglers can keep 6 fish as a daily limit! I also believe 12 inches is too short and should go up. I'm an avid angler but if people want to have a fish fry, go buy it at the store, or target a species that mdc stocks for put and take. Walleye, trout, spoonbill, etc.!

I agree with the purposed changes and think it will help the sport as a whole.

I strongly support the proposed regulation changes for both the small mouth bass special management areas and for the rock bass statewide.

Many Anglers catch and release but do a lot of damage. Maybe you could offer special hooks without a barb. Just got back from my 2nd multi-day float on Current/Jacks Fork and saw some banks eroding. Willow, River Cane and Sycamore plantings in these areas will provide habitat, reduce erosion, clean water, and add to the natural beauty. FYI, on this trip I met an experienced outdoorsman who was kayaking in a small group in Feb on the eleven point river. They witnessed a red wolf after watching a deer jump from a cliff into the river after being chased. Is Missouri going to be part of re-establishing the red wolf back to its historic range? (this is a keystone species that is imperil)

Consider keeping existing 18 inch limit on Gasconade/implement same 18-inch limit on Big Piney below Fort Leonard Wood. Great potential for growing trophy sized smallmouth. Extend

upstream limit of proposed Current River area to lower Round Spring access - already a recognized boundary by boaters relative to seasonal horsepower restrictions. Consider extending existing 15/1 regs on Meramec from Birds Nest downstream to Hwy H/Onondaga Cave access while implementing same regs on Courtois/Huzzah from respective Hwy 8 bridges downstream. Would provide better opportunity for quality angling while protecting seasonally migrating fish from these two tributary streams from harvest in winter months when more concentrated in Meramec River main stem.

Thank you

I appreciate the MDC's efforts to improve the smallmouth and rock bass fishing in our state; as well as the opportunity to voice opinions and concerns about the way our smallmouth and rock bass fisheries are currently being managed. I support the expansion of the smallmouth management areas; especially expanding the area on Big River to Council Bluff as the Big is the river closest to where we live and most of the "meat" fishermen in our area have been concentrating their fishing above Leadwood access in recent years which is the smallest and most vulnerable stretch of the river. I believe that establishing a statewide length limit on rock bass is a step in the right direction as well. Though I never specifically target rock bass, I do catch several at times in the spring while smallmouth fishing and appreciate their sport value and taste. As far as concerns I have the following:

1. I would like to see the Gasconade River monitored more closely in regards to the movement of spotted bass up the river. I can only speak from my personal fishing experiences and what I have observed at tournament weigh ins but over the past 15 years I've caught spots and seen spots weighed in at tournaments farther upriver than the year before. This past summer we caught them as far upriver as the Hwy 28 area and saw them weighed in at tournaments as far upriver as Jerome. In the fall of 2014 I expressed my concerns with a local biologist on an internet message board and received the following in response. "My email to Mr. G."

I have been fishing the middle section of the Gasconade River for about 14 years. During this time I have noticed a gradual upstream migration of the spotted bass. When I first started fishing the river around 2000, I only caught them occasionally around the Rollins Ferry/Pointer's Creek area of the river. However in 2006 we started catching them occasionally around the Bell Chute/Hwy 63/Vienna area. This past summer, we caught some above Jerome and were consistently catching them from the Thox Rock area of the river on down. I have heard reports of anglers catching them above the Hwy 28 bridge and even as far up as Riddle Bridge but realize how fish stories go...

I was curious if the MDC has monitored the movement of the spots on the Gasconade in recent years and if our catches match their samples. I have witnessed firsthand what the spots have done to the Meramec River Basin and I am somewhat concerned that they may do the same to the Gasconade if not kept in check. Thanks!!

"Mr. G.'s response"

I (N.G.) managed the Gasconade River in Phelps and Pulaski Counties (95 miles of river). To answer your questions, samples are conducted for Black Bass every other year from Hwy 63 upstream to I-44 at Hazelgreen. Spotted Bass are captured and recorded during these samples and they are usually common but not abundant in this area of the Gasconade River. However, each sample the year of or concurrently after a major flood I see an influx of spotted bass in the large pools of the river. There have been major floods on this portion of the Gasconade River in 2008, 2010, 2011 and 2013. In years without any major flooding in recent past, I may see 1 or 2 spotted bass per mile around 8 inches long based around the smallmouth bass management zone, some years we didn't see any spotted bass. Last fall (2013) I saw more like 8 spotted bass per mile with most these fish over 12 inches long. Although this can be initially disturbing, I do not think it is anything new to the Gasconade Drainage. In the first edition of "Fishes of Missouri, (1970's)" Dr. Pfeleger writes of a large population of spotted bass on the Gasconade from Hwy 7 (Richland) to Hwy 17 (Waynesville). The historic files show a population of spotted bass in this area much larger than anything we see now. This area of the Gasconade is considered a losing stream to our major springs and is very slow with pools up to 3 miles long; more suited to spotted bass. Subsequently, spotted bass are not anything new to the Gasconade river's traditional smallmouth bass stronghold. Thus, I believe the upstream or downstream migration of spotted bass has happened with the August 2013 flood, however, I do not believe it is anything to be alarmed about. With a few years of no major flooding, like 2014 has been, I feel the habitat will dictate the spotted bass back to where they are traditionally at in Gasconade River. Also, this is very heavily bass fished area and the anglers who are concerned usually keep every legal spotted bass they catch. If you would like to discuss in person please give me a call or email. Though I am in no position to dispute the information Mr. G. presented, I am still concerned that the spots ARE moving up the Gasconade in ever increasing numbers and-if not aggressively monitored and managed- could end up being more of a nuisance than a benefit; just like they are in the Meramec river and its tributaries.

2. I would like to see a more restrictive length and creel limit placed on smallmouth bass on Clearwater lake and the portion of Black River between Hwy K and the lake. As most are aware, several smallmouth migrate downstream to the lake every fall and winter and congregate in the upper area near Bluff View Marina and the hole above. Though many of the anglers who target these fish in the winter practice catch and release. A lot do not and the fact that the lake has no minimum length limit for bass puts a lot of pressure on the smallmouth in the upper section of the lake during this time; potentially reducing the amount of fish that return to the river in the spring to spawn and spend the summer. Though I believe an 18 inch minimum length and 1 fish creel limit like some of the TVA lakes have would be ideal, any increase in length limit and reduction of creel limit would go a long way (in my opinion) in protecting these vulnerable fish.

3. I would like to see the current giggering season shortened and more stringent enforcement of our state's current giggering laws. I believe that the MDC could do MUCH more to curtail the problem of the illegal harvesting of game fish that takes place on some of our state's best smallmouth fisheries in the fall and winter months. I would love to see sting operations and enforcement

check points similar to those conducted by the MDC during firearms deer season and spring turkey season as a means letting the unethical outdoorsmen know that they are being watched and that gigging smallmouth and other game fish is not tolerated and not going to be dealt with lightly anymore.

To whom it may concern, I would first like to thank the MDC for the increased attention to the finest gamefish swimming in Missouri waterways. It has been a long time coming, and I look forward to better research, regulation changes and improved fishing for trophy smallmouth bass (SMB). I would like to begin by saying that current regulation of 6 fish 12" or larger is severely hampering the quality streams of the show me state. This regulation is apparently not being targeted for change, and the MDC is focused on simplifying the regulations. The anglers of Missouri are faced with some very simple regulations when compared to other states, and even other species and fisheries throughout the state. To cater to a small subset of anglers would be a poor course of action. The state of Missouri has more fishing pressure on small streams and rivers than any state I have fished (I travel extensively to fish for SMB and fish around 6-7 states per year). A small percentage of users who are catch and keep anglers can affect the size structure of SMB on a stream or creek. The research on smallmouth in the state is severely lacking and to rush to judgment after only a few years of research on a small subset of the streams in the state, and only small sections of each stream will cause a great disservice to the anglers who use this resource, and would cause the fishing for trophy fish to diminish on the stretches that would no longer have 18" limits. I implore the state to not remove the 18" designation in favor of 15" limits, and instead to examine some methods that would cater to both catch and keep and trophy anglers. If one examines the size structure of SMB in the state, it is clear that every year class of SMB is represented in the vast majority of streams throughout their range. This means that every year is a successful spawn and the populations could support harvest. By utilizing a statewide 14-18" slot limit with a creel limit of 3-4 fish, the state would be able to simplify the regulations while appeasing the catch and keep, trophy anglers, and catch and release fisherman. These regulations would have a great benefit to the populations by providing spawning adults to replenish the fish harvested from the population while providing quality sized fish for recreational fishers. This regulation could be used not only on streams, but also the larger COE reservoirs such as table rock, Stockton, etc. This would simplify the regulations drastically and provide the potential for some truly great fishing throughout the state. It could even be used on all black bass species in streams, which would open up the potential to harvest spotted bass which grow slowly and rarely grow above 14" in some waterways. These also compete directly with SMB and in some areas of the state they are non-native and could be removed from the population prior to reaching spawning size which could benefit those streams. It is also clear that some anglers have trouble identifying spotted bass vs. largemouth bass, and this slot limit would eliminate the potential for misidentification of species for catch and keep anglers. As the research has also shown, smallmouth bass will move great distances for wintering habitat. The current regulations along with these proposed changes utilize stretches of stream with differing regulations. These fish have been found to move out of the management areas

seasonally opening them up to harvest. This could cause problems to both anglers as well as game wardens. To sum up my comments, I would like to say that I am firmly not in support of the removal of 18" minimum length limits in favor of 15" limits. A 15" SMB is not a trophy fish, and given the right regulations, more trophy (18"+) SMB could be available. I feel that the current regulations are somewhat complicated and they could give the uneducated, naïve, or ignorant angler issue, but this does not mean that the current regulations should be scrapped. I would implore the state to examine the use of statewide slot limits if the state is dead set on simplifying regulations. This would simplify the regulations, provide quality fishing, and satisfy all user groups. We must remember that fishing regulations are managing people and not the fish, and that one must have an open mind to truly enact change. A.C.

I agree with keeping a statewide limit but going up to 13 instead of 12 and I think you should only be allowed 3 fish not 6. On the smaller streams one person could clean out a decent fishin' hole in a couple of weekends. Also I am for a change on the special management areas but I think it should be 18in and 1 fish across all special management areas.

I am in favor of the proposed regulations.

The pleasure of any float trip (my favorite Jacks Fork) is just catching fish. So why keep any. The bigger the better.

My wife and I enjoy wade fishing for smallie mouth. We catch a lot of google eye also. We release all the fish we catch. We have caught quite a few 12+inch smallies, and even more less than 12 inches. I would love to see the 15 inch limit expanded to a few more of the creeks. I think the fish in these smaller creeks are more heavily fish than most rivers. I think MDC does an excellent job watching over our great outdoor resources.

First of all, thank you for opening this up for discussion and being willing to listen to the anglers. Like most of the folks you will probably hear from, I am very passionate about Smallmouth Bass in our state. To me there is no more prized game fish out there. Therefore I want to see this native species protected and managed to the highest level. Missouri streams truly have the potential to grow trophy smallmouth and a lot of them. But not with the current regulations and enforcement. I don't have to tell you how slow Smallmouth Bass grow in our streams. They need all the protection they can get. There are a lot of factors that contribute to the current state of our Smallmouth Bass numbers and size. Our numbers are decent but our average size leaves a lot to be desired compared to neighboring states. States that have much stricter regulations. I don't know what the perfect solution is and I won't claim to know. I would love to see catch and release on all smallmouth bass in all streams statewide. But I know that is a dream and not a realistic outcome. I would love to see a slot limit that protects all 12-20" fish. But again I'm not sure how realistic that is. A more realistic dream I have is to see a stream that possesses the ability to grow large numbers of quality smallmouth (15" and greater) and have the MDC make

it catch and release only (or at least a section of it) for at least 5 years. Then strictly enforce. I bet you would be amazed at the numbers and quality of smallmouth that could grow without the possibility of harvest and poaching! The biggest issues I currently see are illegal gigging of smallmouth and over-harvest/poaching. We can change the regulations and improve things considerably but the only way to truly help our Smallmouth Bass populations is strict enforcement of length/possession limits and illegal gigging/poaching. I dread this time of year when gigging season opens and our precious Smallmouth start getting stuck. I urge the MDC to be more proactive in fighting the illegal gigging that is taking place year after year. This entails patrolling the rivers at night, checking private accesses along the river, not just public. Throwing the book at offenders to put fear in those who haven't been caught. This is a much bigger problem than most people and the MDC realizes. I spend thousands of dollars every year in licenses, gas, equipment, outfitters, etc. to chase these precious, native fish. Only to see locals, who spend far less money on the sport and state, abusing the resource. There are plenty of better eating fish in the state, that reproduce in greater numbers and grow quicker. Let's take this opportunity to make a drastic change to improve the Smallmouth Bass fishing on all Missouri streams. It is possible to make our state a trophy Smallmouth destination, but the MDC needs to take the lead. Strict regulations and as much enforcement as possible are the only answers! Again thank you for listening to the anglers. I truly believe the majority of folks you will hear from are die hard catch and release Smallmouth anglers and not meat-hunters. Heed their words as they make up a much greater percentage of the population than those wanting to keep and eat Smallmouth. Thank You!

Would like to see a slot limit for smallmouth bass that would allow a couple of smallmouth bass in 12-14 inch range on rivers with restrictions. This would allow larger bass to be caught and released while providing a length that would make good table fair. I enjoy catching the 15 inch plus on Big Piney, but hate to take one that size home for eating. I do like the change to the goggle-eye, though. Thank you for your time. G.

These are two of my favorite species to fish for. Any changes to make fishing better I'm all for.

Statewide length limit of 15 inches minimum, allow lake with low quantity issues increase to 18 for a period of time, statewide daily limit of 3, regardless of river or lake.

I own about 1/2 mile of the upper Meramec River. I support the MDC's proposals on both the small mouth and rock bass.

Make a 4 year moratorium on catch and release on all streams and rivers in the entire state to let the fish recover from overfishing, then make the limit 1 15" small mouth and 1 10" rock bass. For example, Finley river in southwest Mo always had good fishing but now it's hard to find anything but small every species and even then hard to get any fish at all. Just floated Jacks Fork

from Alley Spring to 2 rivers last week and in entire float got one Small mouth 12" all others very small and small rock bass

I believe that if the public wants to keep and eat the bass they catch they should go to the many lakes and reservoirs that Missouri has and not keep any of the smallmouth and rock bass caught from rivers or streams. Since this would be difficult to enforce or sell to the general public that make all rivers uniform in regulations, 1 smallmouth over 15" and 1 rock bass over 8" all other returned unharmed.

I believe that managing the condition of the rivers and it eco systems is just as important as managing the fisherman. Mining, pesticides, livestock and recreation vehicles do much to destroy the spawning and growth habitat necessary for the smallmouth and rock bass and the food required for them to survive.

I support the proposed new regulations but I do not want to see any further limitations on creel limits.

Hello,

First I would like to state that I own a farm and house on the middle Meramec and have two jet boats as well as several canoes and kayaks. I am what you would call hopelessly addicted to Smallmouth fishing as most of the money I spend on fishing goes towards my smallmouth pursuits. I am on the Meramec at certain points of the year 4 times a week. Why have you putting the trophy areas on the upper part of the river and why can't you extend it the entire length of the stream? Why can't the MDC do anything about the illegal gigging that takes place when the smallmouth are at their most vulnerable point, all massed together in wintering holes or at thermal refuges, they are easy pickings. Why does the MDC seem to worry about the perception of a catch and release situation? You seem to cater to the Missourians who have the need to take home the most important native gamefish Smallmouth. I have so little respect for the non-action that has taken place in regards to Smallmouth populations on Missouri streams by the MDC. You guys don't spend enough time on our waterways to actually know what's going on that I'm not sure I really care anymore. I will continue to report the game code violations I see every winter, the skewered smallmouth left dead, decades of growth pissed away and those are just the ones that the giggers leave, who knows how many they take home eat? I'll continue to release all Smallmouth and you guys just do a whole lot of nothing.

I don't fish the Meramec, Current, or Jacks fork regularly, but the Niangua, Little Niangua, Gasconade, and Osage fork suffer terribly from lack of enforcement. The lower Niangua, especially from Prosperine to Leadmine, is absolutely raped by gigging party's because they obviously know that there will be no enforcement of regulations in that area. I understand the difficulty in periodically patrolling that long stretch of river but hey, that's what you guys get paid the big bucks for. Also, the harassment of anglers by the Niangua Land and Cattle Company in that area needs to be addressed. Can you not make contact with them and officially inform

them of Laws regarding navigable waterways? The hostility displayed by their crew(s) towards river users is uncalled for and technically illegal, I think. Thanks.

I don't really see the need for changes in regulations. The regulations should be fine IF they were enforced. What good would any regulation changes be if the degree of enforcement remains as it is?

I personally would be in favor of keeping the regulations the same and ENFORCING THEM. Words on websites and on pamphlets do nothing to help our fisheries unless those words are backed up with some action that involves getting out of the air conditioned trucks.

Why has there not been a special regulation on Smallmouth at Clearwater Lake in the winter when they stack up on the northern end after migrating down out of all the forks of the Black river? Do you guys even know that the 95% of the Smallmouth migrate to the lake and then back into the river in the Spring? The population and size density in the river during summer months will fluctuate depending on how many get picked off by the meat hunters @ Clearwater. It's a joke that there is no special regulation there specifically. It seems as though you guys cater to meat hunters more than people who actually care about sustaining the resource and growing bigger fish. Here's a novel idea, sting operations at or near private ramps on the Meramec. If you need to know where these ramps are I can show you personally. Massive amounts of Smallmouth, and decades of growth, get skewered from the rivers every Fall and Winter and it sucks. There are reasons why many go to other states now to chase quality Smallmouth. Iowa has the foresight to make certain watersheds Catch and Release only and consequently you can go there and catch four pound Smallies out of dirty ditches. If you think these are personal assaults on how you conduct business, good.

I would favor an 8" minimum length limit statewide for rock bass. The streams where this has been an existing regulation for several years seem to have better overall goggle-eye fishing and slightly larger fish. If it worked on those streams why wouldn't it work on all streams? The small mouth bass proposed regulation sounds good to me!

I think it would be a great idea to have a statewide minimum length limit of 8 inches for rock bass and 15 on all Smallmouths and Largemouths. With more people that can enforce and help those using our water ways to easily understand laws and rules. Statewide rules would help fishing and help everyone in an easier way of thinking. Also, start the trend if you fish a ford or a road crossing a river/stream, put the undersized fish on the upstream side to help growth of our streams. A lot of our low water crossing block fish from going upstream. I remember as a kid catching like 50 goggle eye out of a log jam on the Piney River in an hour on Bettle-spins, yes, the rivers where deeper with less weed growth back then. I fish west Fork Piney (Little Piney in Texas County) almost every day. My roots are on that river & how much we as caretakers/visitors/land owners / our streams/watershed/springs have to be saved for our kids and their kids' kids to enjoy. Passing on not to litter but to be shared by all to enjoy for we are guests

just passing through hoping to share the joy of the outdoors with others without hurting anything. Sure sharing a meal of fish stream side is good but leaving better than it was before for others is a good thing and a great time for others.

I fish many of these rivers, and for both these species. I was not aware of any current limits on Rock Bass (Goggle Eye), although I rarely kept fish smaller than 8 -9 inches. I favor more uniform and easy to understand regulations. Also, how about sending an email with the regulations and changes each year, or a reminder to get them. I currently have a lifetime permit as of this past year, so I don't purchase a yearly permit anymore, but in the past I found that most places that I purchased my permit from did NOT have the regulations books on hand. Summary, make the regulations more uniform, even if it means on some streams you have to release slightly larger fish AND how about some help in learning about the yearly changes.

Please do not lower the 18 inch limit for the Gasconade. This limit produces some of the best quality smallmouth fishing in Missouri. I have never fished the Jack's Fork but I imagine it is the same. Most anglers don't eat bass, particularly smallmouth bass. We cherish the opportunity to catch and release one of the best freshwater fighting fish in the USA. I fish the Big River and the Meramec near St. Clair regularly and you can tell the difference between the 15 inch, 1 bass limit on the Big River and the 12 inch, 6 bass limit on the middle Meramec. I consistently catch better smallmouth on the Big River. I only occasionally catch trophy size smallmouth on the middle Meramec.

Proposed changes seem in order. Of course of less consequence for those of us who do not fish to eat.

I'm for making both statewide.

Increase minimum length for smallmouth to 16 inches in the Special Management Areas that are currently in place and in added/expand areas. Keep 12 inch minimum in all other streams but reduce possession to 4 daily. Increase rock bass minimum length to 8 inches statewide.

I think there should be a state wide Black Bass size limit of 15 inches at least, maybe 18 inches, in all Missouri lakes and streams, and no kill during the spawning months in spring. Goggle Eye I am not sure about, but there are plenty of other fish in our waters if people are so hard pressed that they have to catch a stringer of Black Bass, just my opinion, the monetary cost is the same for anyone who feels they need to destroy a small stream to get a handful of meals. That excuse doesn't cut it anymore.

I am from Missouri and have fished the rivers and streams for over 50 years. I am in full support of the proposed new regulations. Thank you for your efforts.

What are the boundaries of the proposed Current River management area?

The Big and Little Niangua Rivers need to be included in the special management areas for smallmouth and goggle eye.

I like the purposed changes. Yet I think all rivers should be 16 inches for smallmouth rather than 15 inches. While expanding all managed areas to 18. Include part of the Elk River for the Google Eyes, and a 9 inch limit in managed areas.

To start with, I applaud you hearing angler feedback. I've been fishing in Missouri my whole life, and am an avid smallmouth angler. I've seen the decline in quality fishing at a pretty rapid rate, especially regarding big fish. I'm concerned mostly about 2 things: the serious lack of enforcement and thought regarding gigging in smallmouth streams, and the priority given to catch and keep anglers over catch and release anglers. Your data seems to lack large enough sampling sizes to make an educated guess in how to deal with Smallmouth bass populations in Missouri. I would like to propose the banning of gigging in smallmouth special management areas, as well as an overall shortened season, with a greater emphasis on enforcement. True that most giggers are ethical, but it only takes a few bad eggs to wipe out the big fish in the river. We see evidence of this after gigging season starts. I will also show up to certain meeting with a paper copy of more of my comments. Again thank you for listening.

Moving in the right direction, but please be open to the idea of larger minimum sizes as we all know how slowly these species grow. All said, I think the MDC does a great job and serves our state well. Thank you.

I think the changes are well needed, however, they just don't go far enough. Also, I would like to see a test ban on gigging on a couple of streams or rivers. Giggers are decimating smallmouth populations in some areas and they obviously pay no attention whatsoever to any length limits, etc. I strongly believe that without severe restrictions or banning of gigging, smallmouth populations will fail to improve significantly.

Would like to have seen 15" & one fish limit state wide. B.G. -member Mo Smallmouth Alliance & property owner on Meramec River.

I am a property owner on a stream in Washington county. I trust MDC's decisions will help create a great fishing environment for anglers and wild life. One thing that I would like to see changed is enforcement of regulations on streams. I have seen people at Kingston access keeping more smallmouth than their legal daily limit. I personally do not keep any small mouth. I will keep a largemouth or two every once in a while.

I am very much in favor of expanding the special management areas for both smallmouth bass and rock bass. I reject the notion that the regulations are too complicated, based on the fact that duck hunting regulations and trout fishing regulations are both much more complicated and I

have never encountered a waterfowl hunter or a trout fisherman that complained about how complicated their regulations are.

I feel that the length limit on Goggle eye should have happened a long time ago. I have seen the decline of good catches of Goggle eye in the last 7-8 years. I am a wade fisherman of our small streams and fish, Beaver creek, Bryant creek and the North fork of the White about two times a week. I would love to see the length of Smallmouth raised to 13" and Goggle eye to 8" not the seven inches talked about at MDC

Would like to see the length limit on Smallmouth raised to 13" and the limit of Rock Bass to 8" the Creel limit of both species be five fish.

While I love the idea of changing regulations to better promote trophy Smallmouth fishing, the changes do no good without someone to enforce them. I cannot speak for all the rivers or even the whole Big River; but the stretch that I fish, (Between Hwy Y bridge and Morse Mill) is severely neglected. In the past 13 years of fishing this stretch of the river I have never seen anyone checking limits, size, or even for a fishing license, while I promise you there are people fishing there disregarding the idea of all three of those. Once again I support the effort in broadening the special management waters, but that is only half the battle. Thank you, and for the hope of more miles added next year. C.M.

All in favor to expanded smallmouth mgmt area. Please consider more expansions in the near future. The upper Black River needs to be on the next expansion. The percentage of protected areas is so very small compared to all decent fisheries. Thx.

I'm confused on the wording of this bill. So what it is saying is that all bass within the managed areas would have a 15 inch limit and only (1) small-mouth bass could be kept? Correct? That means you could keep (5) largemouth bass and (1) smallmouth bass, but all six of the fish would have to be at least 15 inches, correct statement? I'm all for the extended length limit, just not sure exactly what you are proposing.

I've fished the upper 78 miles of the Meramec. While I love to bass fish, catching smallies on a river is the best. Any way that the size of these fish can be increased, is a great idea. We usually catch anywhere from 20-40 smallmouth in a given 5 mile stretch. While his numbers are good, over the past 10 years, I've only caught 5 fish over 3 lbs. Thanks for these proposed changes! C.D.

Too little, too late. However, at least some change is better than none. Why no change in regulations for the Bourbeuse? The Mineral Fork has been decimated mainly due to local meat fisherman and no enforcement. Why not catch and release on current special reg. waters? Why not decrease the current 6 fish limit to 2 or 3?

I strongly support the length limit regulations proposed. I do, however, recommend that smallmouth and largemouth bass be increased to 14 inches statewide. Allowing 12 inch bass to be kept really doesn't make as much sense these days; and in my opinion (35 years of river fishing) the 14 inch limit could have a significant positive impact on the size of fish in many stream settings across the state.

I agree, make these changes. You guys do a great job of keeping out state beautiful and bountiful, keep up the good work.

Yes, and please add Shoal Creek in Joplin.

I float the Osage Fork River occasionally and would very much be in favor of a statewide length limit on our goggle eye population. I would be happy with the 8 inch minimum or even 7 and a half.

Can the possession limits outside the special management be reduced if the length limit is not increased? Thanks, D.B.

While we don't have a substantial rock bass population in north Missouri, we do have a few fish. They rarely reach seven inches. If you make this a statewide rule, you will effectively close us to any harvest. Second, the smallmouth bass season in north Missouri is open throughout the year. It isn't mentioned if this rule would change, but anglers in this area would prefer to not remove the opportunity to harvest fish in the spring.

Thanks for taking special interest in these 2 game fish species. A 7 inch and daily limit of 12 rock bass and a 12 inch with a daily limit of 5 on smallmouth would be my choice if my voice could be heard but I think MDC could help with diminishing numbers particularly in the Niangua river system and I'm sure this would apply with several other rivers in the state would be to put more agents in the field by special task force or whatever, to control the illegal harvesting of these species during the giggering season, or make the penalties stiffer. Over the years I've heard of illegal harvesting but never witnessed it firsthand. Or even making training available for giggers to be able to identify the difference between a sucker and smallmouth while under the lights of a trolling boat. Thanks for your time. M.

I am in favor of the above changes for smallmouth and rock bass and the expansion of the special black bass management areas on streams. I would like to see a reduction of creel from 6 down to 4 and the length increased to 15 inches for black bass outside of the stream management sites. Thanks.

I think that would not only simplify the regulations, but would also increase the population of both species. I think the proposed size limits will have a positive effect.

I need to hopefully get my fishing license again next year & get my wife hers & fishing pole. With us it would be more helpful coming by Springfield, MO MDC Nature Center to better understand the proposed Newer Fishing Regulations.

I believe that the best action would be to err on the side of the species survival and wellbeing. Of course it would also be important to be frugal with any funds being attributed to the species maintenance so that the impact to the overall conservation budget is minimally impacted.

I personally would love to see the changes. You should also consider a statewide 14 inch limit instead of the 12 and 2 fish instead of 6. For smallmouth it would only create more and bigger fish for every angler to enjoy catching and **RELEASING!**

15" length limit on smallmouth bass is great however an one fish limit is simply silly. Our lakes such as Table Rock Lake and Stockton Lake have a great smallmouth population and tournament fishermen such as myself rely on the smallmouth species at certain times of the year. Arkansas had a limited smallmouth creel limit several years ago on Bull Shoals Lake and dropped it. If you want a one fish limit on streams or rivers the river fishermen should comment. On the lakes a one fish creel limit on smallmouth will deter fishermen and mostly tournament fishermen.

I support these changes; however, I wish there would be stricter regulations on harvesting smallmouth. I would support a 15 inch minimum length limit to keep smallmouth everywhere in order to create better smallmouth fishing.

After catching many smallmouth on some of these rivers this spring/summer, it was sad to see a very small average length. Thought it was my tackle or technique. Looks like there is some concern out there though. What successful studies are out there from other states? Seems like the best smallmouth waters would have the most restrictions. Just make one statewide length and limit. Plenty of other species to fish. Something needs to change.

I would love to see the statewide non special management area limits on smallmouth bass be more stringent than you have proposed. I fish the Gasconade mostly just downstream from the Jerome management area. I get many 11-13 inch smallies but few over 14. I would like a 13-14 inch keeper rule and a lower than 6 daily limit. Thanks for asking. RJ

Yes, PLEASE put a length and creel limit on rock bass. Smallmouth should be at least 14" statewide. This would solve the trophy area problem. Also, very few eat smallies anyway. Thanks for your service.

7" min for rock bass sounds great. Any smaller is a waste of a good fish. 18" limit on smallmouth anywhere is just impossible. They may get that big but I've never caught one. 15" min in restricted areas is more than big enough. PLEASE! PLEASE! PLEASE! Can we do something with the overabundance of alligator gar at spillways, especially Wappapello spillway.

They slaughter too many good game fish and has been a major population abundance for many years.

I hate to say it but the older generation decimated fish with their right to take mentality. Retirees attack stocked areas and fish before and after regulated times. All species suffer from the impact of multitudes of elderly with limitless time to fish being able to take way past assigned limits, out of season. I sat in a restaurant once and listened to a group of then discussing the 70 trout they got from the stock program at Suson park. Agents need to do their checking at cleaning stations where dozens and dozens of over limit bass and crappie meet their demise.

My opinion is that we should have a statewide 15" limit on smallmouth bass and limit of 2-3 per day. To be honest I'd rather all bass be catch and release but I know that's not feasible.

I appreciate that the MDC is actively taking steps to simplify the smallmouth and rock bass regulations. I am primarily a catch-and-release angler for black bass, and most enjoy catching larger fish (even if it is less frequently). I support any science-based regulations that increase the general quality (size and relative abundance) of both the smallmouth and rock bass fisheries (largemouth and spotted bass too). Even if that means lowering daily limits and increasing minimum lengths. I would also support the use of MDC funds to investigate how to best increase the general quality of Missouri's black bass fishery. As is, the fishery is very good, but I think it could be among the nation's best with some additional careful management.

Bass are by far the most common sport fish in Missouri. Many competitions exist in our larger lakes and water ways. That said, smallmouth and goggle eye are common in smaller streams and rivers too, more so than largemouth or spotted bass. These streams are ideal for kayaks, canoes and small boats and attract a different kind of angler than what you will find on the larger bodies of water in Missouri. Many times these streams only hold a few large smallmouth or goggle eye. Lowering the minimum length limits in these streams will decrease the amount of larger fish and disappoint those anglers who are looking to catch and release a true lunger! In addition, it will decrease the number of breeding size fish which will reduce the overall population. I understand people want to catch more keeper fish but lowering the length limit isn't the best answer. Doing so will only push the issue onto the next generation. Soon we will be looking to reduce the minimum lengths again because all of the keepers are gone again. We have to understand that these resources should be persevered for future generations. The rivers today are heavily populated with fisherman and we need strict regulations to keep these habitats protected. Missouri's streams are small and fragile. While this change doesn't seem big it will have a large impact on the whole ecosystem.

I would encourage the MDC to expand the smallmouth bass special reg areas. I would like to see stricter regs on the Gasconade between the mouth of the Osage Fork and Riddle bridge. This would hook two existing special areas together, and make a long stretch of continuous trophy

smallmouth fishing. This is a move toward eventually making 15" smallmouth rules statewide, which I fully support.

Simplify them as much as possible! I do not travel very much to go fishing so it would be very nice to know what the size and creel limits are, without question.

Protect the Smallmouth even further, statewide 15" min, period. Goggleeye are still plentiful in SW Mo, and great to eat. Bigger fish would be nice. Statewide min on rock bass is a great idea as well. One more thing, what has happened to all the bullhead catfish? They have vanished the last 20 years from streams and rivers.

I concur with your changes, so long as MDC, being the subject matter experts, believes these changes will positively affect fish populations. On a side note, go ahead and put HP restrictions on Current River, to make it simpler to traverse. There's no reason to have 200 HP motors running the river at 60mph. 40-60 is fine for fishing and gigging. Any higher should be for open waters.

I'm definitely in favor of any regulations that limit the number of smallmouth and goggle eye that can be harvested, and/or methods allowed to catch them. I think this is crucial to improve the quality of fishing for those species. They are both native Missouri fish and in my opinion the smallmouth is the greatest sport fish period. I feel we have a responsibility to protect them as much as possible.

I appreciate the steps taken to promote improved Smallmouth fishing & habitat but these are baby steps Bigger steps could be taken which would have better results.

I like the changes but would add NO length limit on Largemouth and Spots.

The proposal to simplify and unify the smallmouth bass special management length and creel limits is a good one. I also like the expansion areas proposed. I agree with the statewide rock bass proposal as well.

I can't believe you didn't have a meeting in Rolla Mo. 75% of the big piney and gasconade fishermen are out of Rolla and surrounding area. I am all for new regulations but you need to go to 8 inches on the goggle state wide.

I practice catch and release on rock and smallmouth bass. Anything you can do to increase my catch of larger fish I support.

I fully support the expansion of smallmouth bass special management areas, and would also like to recommend the Bourbeuse River be considered for such an expansion. The habitat exists in this river for quality fish, and I feel that extra protection to help mitigate the effects of

competition from spotted bass would be beneficial to the smallmouth bass population structure. Will the goggle eye minimum length limit of 7" be truly statewide, or only apply to the highlighted waters in the special management areas map?

I go smallmouth fishing in the Huzzah/Meramec junction on two-four float trips a year. I catch anywhere from one to two fish usually a trip between 12"-14". Of course I let them go immediately and unharmed, but I'd like to see them get to the legal limit. I say do whatever is necessary to ensure this. Y'all have my support! Thanks, J.E.

Why not 15" for all and day of 2 that way you would not have two or three def. rules this would make easy for all and allow for big fish. Myself, I don't fish for them. It's time to make all rules be the same for all fish and game that way more people would come here because where they go would be the same, not have to know what the rule would be where they're at. It's time for you guys to make use of your time, to make what would help the whole state, not just one place over another.

Smallmouth fishery is priceless. Model program in key areas after Mn Upper Mississippi River from St. Cloud down to Confluence of Crows River. Since 1992, 12 to 20 Slot.. can keep 2 under 12" and 1 over 20. Smallmouth fishery is world class for size and numbers. No kill policy in effect after Sept 14 till ? Do not allow gigging on the stretch of river with this special slot. Gasconade or Current River probably best candidate for this. After time, the results will be PRICELESS.

I have been a smallmouth fisherman for over 40 years on Ozarks Stream Fishing. I believe that all of Missouri's streams should have special management. Most of the time when I see anglers with many goggle eye or smallmouth are unaware of the mgmt. restrictions and are local to the area. More signs and enforcement at popular take out/put in conservation areas. I also believe that giggers take many game fish. I have never met an honest gigger, they always admit to taking game fish. We own a farm on the upper Big Piney river where giggers flood the river at night. They use our gravel bar to filet or cut up the fish to make it hard for conservation officers to identify without DNA. Please email, I will be happy to answer all questions. I buy a fishing license every year, always catch and release on every fish.

Sounds fine to me. When it comes to small mouth and goggle eye I practice catch and release anyway. About the only fish I keep to eat are catfish and blue gill/pumpkin seeds. I do however enjoy catching a nice size smallmouth or goggle eyes every now and then.

At what size does a fish become sexually reproductive? I'm curious more than anything. Is it 7 inches for goggle eye? And I've read or heard that a small mouth bass grows an inch a year? At what length do they reach sexual maturity and do fish keep growing or do they cap their growth due to other conditions (ie. habit and food) And what about Table rock lake any change in

regulations there? And why is it that table rock is the only lake in the Ozarks with small mouth and goggle eye?

Lack of enforcement of existing regulations in and around Van Buren on the Current river is a major problem.

I absolutely support changing the regulations by increasing the minimum size and reducing the creel limit. I think too many small fishing are being taken out of our streams before they can get big.

HOWEVER, I think the proposed changes will lead to confusion. I would like to see a blanket regulation. For example: On all Ozark Streams, the Smallmouth Bass limit is; 15" minimum with a creel limit of 1. The Ozark streams are: Current River, Jacks Fork River, Eleven Point River, Etc.

Knowing this doesn't consider my area but I see these regulations coming to my area in the future. At present I like the regulations the way they are. I go get some worms, throw my line out catch what I will for my dinner. Yes, I stay with present regulations but I'm not interested in trophies.

I agree with all the proposed black bass regulations except for reducing the smallmouth length from 18" to 15". I feel it should be kept at 18" in the sma's. I'm an avid catch and release stream fishermen. I appreciate all the great work you do!

I fish mainly on the James. The fishing is currently good on the James. I would propose either a catch and release regulation or a one fish per day for the entire James. Another option would be to require a tag to keep more than one fish per day on the James or any other Missouri river. As the rivers get more and more crowded I can't see how a limit of 6 fish per day is good for future generations of river fisherman. I'd also like to think that most river fisherman don't need to keep the smallmouth for everyday sustenance.

I fully support the new limits. In fact, I think it should be expanded to all streams of Missouri! Gives folks a chance to catch (and release if under the new limit) more and bigger fish!

I support all proposals that will ensure/enhance healthy populations.

I recommend statewide regs to reflect those of the Special Mgt Areas. There is a lot of prime smallmouth habitat not included in the Mgt Areas. I don't believe smallmouth should be kept, period, due to their slow growth rate and importance to these watersheds and their value as a draw to anglers from across the midwest. We are gathering as many people around the Spfd area as possible to support the proposed regs, but in reality most of my friends would support a much more robust mgt of this species.

I support the proposed changes

I applaud MDC's management efforts in all aspects of our shared forest fish and wildlife resources, and recognize the constant need to balance the needs/wants of resource users. That said, I am writing here to share my opinion that, although the proposed changes are headed in a good direction, they are NOWHERE NEAR ENOUGH. These reasons support my opinion:

- 1) We have no zero limit/no creel waters. We need these at least to get data on how the fish populations will respond. These waters would be a destination for anglers from in and out of state. MANY popular fisheries in the US are catch and release only.
- 2) The statewide limit of 6 bass is way too liberal for the small Ozark streams which are not in a management area (and the vast majority is not). The statewide limit for streams should be lowered, especially SMALL streams like Bull, Swan, and Beaver.
- 3) Hundreds or thousands of low impact catch and release anglers have less impact on the fish population than a few fisherman compelled to keep the limit each trip, and yet the regulations cater to the consumptive users.
- 4) Human populations and related anthropomorphic stressors are increasing, otters are re-established, and climate change impacts (which will likely include more extremes of flow and temperature) make the world of a Smallmouth harder to survive in than ever, and we should respond by increased protection.

The current plan proposal for smallmouth, and rock bass, is NOT ENOUGH. (thanks for the opportunity for input!)

Go MDC. I think this is excellent. Want to see my grandkids enjoy some better quality stream fishing. Long time creek fisherman and have seen too many blatant abuses by folks keeping numerous small goggle eye.

I agree with the proposed changes.

I support all of the recommendations provided to date. As a property owner on the Bourbeuse River I would also like to see a management area for smallmouth bass on the Bourbeuse. I would recommend the area from Peters Ford to Riekers Ford with a minimum of 15 inches and a limit of one per day. Thanks for the great job that MDC is doing.

On the Black River, upstream of Clear Water downstream of K Highway, smallmouth fishing has gone south. There are too many gar in the river. It started since the flood a few years ago. It doesn't matter what limits we set if the gar remain in these quantity. I have been fishing the black for 35 years. Most of my fishing is catch and release.

I am in favor of the smallmouth changes. I am not really in favor of the 7" length limit on goggle eye, especially if the change will have little statistical change in population other than harvest size. Each additional regulation diminishes the quality of the experience, be it ever so slight. It's just one more point where there is a fine line between legal and not, making a precise

measurement. It's a nuisance and if it has to be done to preserve the species, then let it be so. When the walleye length at Stockton was 18" I released many fish that were 17-17 7/8th inches and caught few over 18", now that the limit is 15" I am catching mostly 14-14 1/2 " fish. Have released several paddlefish fractions of an inch shy of 34". Please make a decision that is biological in nature rather than people-pleasing. If you do this I will be satisfied with what changes are made. In the "good old days" MDC used common sense and science, made unbiased reasonable decisions and rules without public input, and people accepted that MDC was doing the right thing. I am in favor of the old fashioned way.

I fish mainly Table Rock and small mouth population is thriving.

State wide Rock Bass 8" and limit 8. State wide Smallmouth 16" and limit 1, easy to remember. Most fishermen are not keeping Smallmouth anyway unless it is a trophy size and they want to "show it off" by mounting it or getting their photo taken. Special management areas for Rock Bass was 8 inches, why not make the entire state 8" and reduce the limit to 8 to allow them time to grow and increase populations.

Like the length limit on rock bass state wide. Would like to know where the proposed small mouth area on current river is and about extending Jack's Fork area.

I believe this is a great step in promoting small mouth fishing. It's getting harder and harder to catch any mature fish in the 15"+ range on the Eleven Point River. The mature ones that are big enough to keep almost never get returned to the river, making it harder to get on in the length limit required.

I favor all proposed regulation changes! In addition I think the conservation dept. should consider a special management area on the Gasconade south of I-44.

I would like to see tighter restrictions on the harvest of smallmouth bass and rock bass. As noted, the growth of both species is slow. Most fishermen are not aware of this. I have noticed a steady decline in both number and quality of smallmouth and rock bass on the Meramec River basin as well as others. I recently fished a SMA on the Gasconade and noticed significantly more fish and larger in average size by a few inches and I would like to see SMA applied to a much broader scope (i.e. Meramec Springs Eureka). I, as would many other anglers that I speak to, would support a very limited harvest of smallmouth and rock bass on all Ozark streams. Additional education about the differences between large, spot, and smallmouth bass would hopefully spread more information and gain support for a more limited harvest of a key natural resource.

I have never kept a smallmouth, and do not intend to. I do love to catch them. I would like to see a lower number limit. I float overnight often, and keep some goggle eye or perch to eat if I am fish hungry. In my opinion much better fare. I like the 7 inch length on them as I see some little

ones kept. You all have done an excellent job, while Crooked Creek in AR is better than anything I have fished up here, we have some excellent fishing with mixed sizes. Thanks

The smallmouth bass is a natural treasure and should not be killed, period. If you want fish to eat, target another species pan fish. Myself and my floating buddies never kill this great fish never have never will the battle is your reward.

I would suggest adding Huzzah Creek to the list of proposed special management areas. I had known it to have an abundance of fish (smallmouth, goggle eye) but last trip, I saw zero evidence there were any at all.

I live along the James River management zone and can say that it works. We catch and release many 15 inch + smallmouth that 10 years ago would be 11 - 13 inch fish.

I support the MDC's plans to expand and simplify the Small Mouth Bass Special Management Regulations and set a minimum length limit for Rock Bass. I would also support limiting the number of Small Mouth Bass which may be kept on all other streams from 6 to 3.

In any stream or stream zone where there is special management, or where the fishery needs protection, fast moving power boats should be restricted. The wake and wave action cause both erosion and silt. These adversely affect the stream quality, spawning areas and food supply for smallmouth, rock bass and other creatures. At the least, these should be no-wake zones. Otherwise, the proposals appear sound. J.S.

I'm writing to support the MDC's proposed regulation changes and strongly encourage you to implement every possible conservation practice which will conserve and enhance our river and stream smallmouth and rock bass fisheries for generations to come. Thank you.

I live in the heart of smallmouth fishing and fish a lot (my wife says I fish full time and work part time). I agree the time has come to look at our regulations, but we must also look at how the fish's environment is changing. You can't separate the fish from the water they live in. Over the past 15 years I have seen the spotted bass go from never being caught in our "smallmouth" rivers to catching several a day. We know spotted bass will hurt the smallmouth population in various ways. I just don't catch the number of larger smallmouth (and largemouth) I did 10 years ago. My suggestion is to reduce the limit of smallmouth and raise the length limit. This will allow the larger fish greater ability to populate. Also let's keep the no length limit of spotted bass and raise the number of fish an angler can keep, helping to reduce the challenges smallmouth have for spawning. We have a world class smallmouth fishery, but unless we act, it will be gone. We must look at the changing use of our smallmouth rivers. They have changed from a fishing area to an amusement ride. I'm not against floating, but when thousands of people are overusing our fragile streams, we must protect them. I can't believe it is in the best interest of smallmouth (or

any fish) or our streams when you can walk from bank to bank for miles on rafts, canoes, and inner tubes and never get your feet wet.

I realize making "changes" to regulations invites criticism. However, the changes you are proposing do little to accomplish anything for the benefit of smallmouth and goggle eye on Missouri streams. I'm sorry but that's my honest opinion and it's based upon 50 years of fishing our streams. I'm a float fishing guide and I catch more smallmouth and have caught more than you can possibly believe. Where I to simply practice anything other than catch and release, I alone would do harm to their population, honest! Your "study" determined what I already knew. You would be getting a HUGE return on your tagged fish! The reason should be obvious and the conclusions should be obvious, too. Yet, if I want to (or if anyone else wants to) I can go right on keeping six of them per day next year, legally, on most all Ozark streams. Fact: ten years to grow an 18 inch smallmouth. TEN YEARS and your "study" suggests doing so little for their actual long term benefit that it simply makes me sick to see how ineffective MDC's efforts can be for one of our most treasured, natural resources, it's a damn shame, honest! See you on the 13th of October!

All rivers and streams should have a limit of one small mouth bass at least 15 inches or over taken per person. And all goggle eye should have to be at least 8 inches in length. This will help to ensure that our rivers do not get depleted of game fish too quickly before they have time to grow.

I strongly support the consolidation of MO's special management zone regulations, plus I support the expansion of those areas as proposed for Smallmouth Bass. I also support the addition of management zones as proposed for Rock Bass. Additionally, I would like to propose the creation of a management zone of Smallmouth on certain portions of the Bourbeuse River, to be determined, to help further improve that wonderful fishery. I would also propose that MDC reduce the daily limit numbers outside of management zones for largemouth and smallmouth from 6 to 3 or 4 statewide. I cannot think anything more harmful to the state's healthy black bass population than the current daily limit or anything that could be more helpful to the population than a reduction in the daily limits. I am a lifelong fisherman and have specifically enjoyed stream fishing for more than 30 years. I am a former Indiana DNR professional and have dealt with numerous fish, wildlife and natural resources issues during my 13 years as Department Deputy Director earlier in my career. Thank you for the opportunity to comment. P.J.E.

I would like to voice my opposition to the proposed Current River Smallmouth Special Management Area. There currently are several bass tournaments held on the Current River, the proposed expansion of the Special Management areas would eliminate these events and cost the cities of Van Buren and Doniphan the money these sportsmen spend in the communities. Thank You, J.J.

All streams, creeks and rivers should be fall under the proposed regulations for Black Bass Special Management Areas - Only one fish limit and fish must be over 15". Goggle eye limit should be increased to 8".

I would like to see the Niangua River UPSTREAM of Bennett Spring added to the Smallmouth Bass SMA list.

1. I strongly support the proposed changes to Smallmouth and Rock Bass Special Management Areas. These proposals are certainly a big step in the right direction and I support quickly passing these regulations into law and implementation ASAP.
2. I am not against fishermen keeping some of the fish they catch. Consider, however, reducing the creel limit for 12 in. smallmouth from 6 to 3. Why, because MDC'S Water Quality Monitoring database will, no doubt, indicate a steadily increasing amount of harmful chemicals in creeks and headwaters, resulting in a deteriorating reproduction habitat for smallmouth spawning, resulting in fewer numbers of smallmouth.
3. Another alternative; 15 in. size limit with a creel limit of 3 as a state wide regulation for all free flowing streams.

About time. Re: Smallmouth- not enough water added and I think slot or restricted size should be statewide. Can't understand why you didn't add Bryant, Upper North Fork about Hammond, Beaver Creek especially below Bradleyville, Bull Crk, Upper 11pt, Upper Current and others. Re: Goggle Eye- hardly ever catch more than one or two and small ones at that. Did catch a 10" female on upper Current last week. Used to catch many more especially in spring. Agree with adding management focus but be aggressive. Loosing this species. Which brings me to another point. The real reason for declining #'s isn't creel limits, etc. it's changes in river structure mainly filling of holes with gravel. I have been floating many rivers in S Mo for over 50 years. I have seen them become graveled in to the point habitat for spawning, protective rocks for fry, higher velocity water due to shallowing of stream beds, etc. all causing serious and devastating changes to our precious resource affecting much more than just smallmouth and goggle eye. I support your attempts to control downward spiral but the real fix is stopping the devastating changes occurring in our beautiful and vulnerable clear water streams. Reach out to the other state/federal agencies and form a partnership to address the multiagency impacted resource! Do something! K.C.

I think there should be a statewide 12-14" size limit on both largemouth and smallmouth streams; you get to keep 3 fish, with Special Management areas being total Catch and Release. In areas with too many Spotted Bass or maybe stunted LM or SM, those areas can be given different regulations. Statewide 7" for Goggle Eye sounds like a good plan.

Have fished Big Sugar Creek in McDonald County for over 50 years. I fish for small mouth and goggle eye. We need a simple rule for both. Small mouth limit of 2 fish daily of 15 inches or

longer and goggle eye limit of 10 fish 8 inches or longer. These rules should apply to all waters in Missouri. "KISS" Keep it simple, does not matter what stream or body of water. This will assure compliance and give the fish a chance to mature.

I support the new regulations. Thank you.

The more we can restrict harvesting of Small Mouth Bass 18 in. and under, the better. Overfishing, overharvesting, and increased population of black bass threatens, what I believe, is Missouri's most precious resource for anglers, the Small Mouth Bass. The Boston Mountains and Ozark/Mark Twain Forest contain some of the most beautiful natural areas in the World. Fishing for small mouth bass in this domain provides a World Class experience to those that you have been "hired" to conserve. I highly recommend that you adopt the changes requested by the MSA and further suggest that a rotating restriction of no-fishing areas in order to speed rejuvenation of the resource. I think we have seen the impact that the wet summer has had this year. Less stress equals enhanced fishing experience after impediments or restrictions expire.

I would like to see it left the way it is. Smallmouth bass are there to catch and release not to eat

Although I am saddened by the elimination of the 18 inch minimums currently in place, I do fully support these proposed changes as being a welcome effort in protecting a valuable resource. I consider this to be an excellent balance between the sometimes competing interests of the harvest fisherman and the conservation oriented sport fisherman. With these regulations in place we will have a decent shot at maintaining a sustainable, quality fishery for years to come. Your thoughtful, science based approach is to be commended.

Retain smallmouth limits at 15" minimum, 1 per day. Increase goggle eye limit to 8".

I've been fishing Current River - a roughly 30-mile stretch above and below Van Buren - for more than 50 years, almost exclusively for smallmouth. In my opinion, the smallmouth fishery in that section of river is healthier now than at any time in my memory. I haven't kept a smallmouth for about 30 years. Most of the serious bass fishermen I know also practice catch and release on Current River. Your proposal to create a smallmouth bass special management area from the U.S. Highway 60 bridge upstream to the mouth of Jacks Fork is an excellent idea. That will give the tournament fishermen a long stretch of the lower river (about 60 miles) in which to hold their events. I think your smallmouth proposal will be met with good public support. Extending the Jacks Fork management zone also makes good sense. The statewide 7-inch length limit on goggle-eye also is a good plan. I truly appreciate your science-based approach to the conservation of Missouri's outdoor resources.

Dear Sir, Although I commend the MDC on its recognition and efforts to improve the quality of Smallmouth in Missouri streams, I believe the new proposed regulation changes falls short. There seems to be the notion that the taking of at least 1 fish must be sanctioned by the State. I

know I speak for hundreds if not thousands of Smallmouth Fishermen when I say A creel limit of zero (0) would be perfectly fine and very well received. I personally have never intentionally killed a Smallmouth Bass, nor do I know anyone who has taken a Smallmouth from any Stream. The joy of Smallmouth fishing is the challenge of catching large fish - over 15". It's equally joyful to ease that fish back into the stream and watch her swim off. I still remember my first 15" Smallmouth swimming off and the smile as I watched it swim back home. That instant is when I realized that "Catch and Release" isn't only about Conservation. It's about completion of, and thanks for accepting my offer and giving me the thrill of the fight. The fight is all I'm looking for. I'm not speaking as a biologist but as a well-heeled stream fisherman. Looking at the map of current and proposed expansion of Special Management Areas, the question comes to mind, How are these areas determined? Fish counts through shocking? Surveys? Both? Other? I see that the Big River is nearly entirely covered, which is good. The Meramec has only 15 miles designated. Here's where my question comes. Why just this 15 miles? I assume shocking is often used and it was found that this stretch produced small numbers. Is that because of heavy fishing or did the stream change during floods and the fish had to move. With some exceptions, rarely do I find last year's honey hole producing this year. Why? The hole doesn't exist. It's filled in or the channel shifted. Shocking is just a snapshot of that day. Now if the study is over several years then certainly there's more validity but, maybe this stretch will rarely produce quantities of quality fish. I've only fished 4-6 miles of this section (approx 19 bridge to Birdsnest), 3 or 4 times and my impression is the holes are few and far between. I have and have seen decent fish caught here although. Hwy 30 Bridge and 8-10 miles upstream has given me less than satisfactory results. Many holes - few quality fish. Why is this area not protected, for instance? My proposal, if we must have a creel limit of at least 1 fish that it be raised to 18". I cringe when I say that but 18" fish are so rare it would nearly serve my and many other sport fishermen's desire to halt the taking of Smallmouth. A better solution would of course be to ban the taking of any Smallmouth, putting more focus on the taking of Spotted Bass for food. How would it be, after the ban of taking these fish that the prospect of 15", 18" and 24" fish were common? I could definitely go on but I believe you understand my point. Sincerely , T.P.

I don't agree with keeping the 12" minimum on small mouth bass or making a 7" minimum on rock bass. I fish and hunt 3-4 days a week year round, and witness too many people not abiding by creel limits or size limits. In southeast Missouri, this is a huge problem. I support a statewide 15" min on small mouth, and for a few years, a Dailey creel of 2. For rock bass, I'd support a statewide min of 8" and a lower creel for a few years, all to get those populations up. Southeast Missouri has some nice size fish, but over harvest make adults few and far between. I'd really like to see more officers out checking anglers more. I realize that we have a shortage of officers here, and they cover a lot of area, but poaching of fish is a MAJOR problem here, and not just for the species mentioned. As for smallies, my friends and I are turning to fishing drainage ditches that hold water year round. We are finding more and more quality size small mouth there, and in more abundant numbers. Why? Because hardly anyone fishes them so they aren't being over harvested.

The management area regulation on the Gasconade River needs to remain 18 inches 1 fish daily and on the Big Piney the regulation from Eastgate downstream to the confluence with the Gasconade needs to be changed 18 inches, 1 fish daily. The Rock Bass regulation needs to be 8 inches statewide and warmouth need to be removed from the regulation as included. Anglers can tell the difference between the 2 species.

I am in favor of making all Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas require an 18-inch minimum length limit with a one (1) fish per day creel limit. I am in favor of making all Rock Bass Special Management Area require an 8-inch minimum length limit. I am in favor of all of the proposed new or expanded Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas.

I agree with the changes but would like to see them both state wide on all our rivers. The Gasconade is a great fishery and could benefit from these regulations.

I strongly agree with the proposed new regulations. As an avid bass fisherman for 40+ years, I feel the quality of large and small mouth bass fishing in Missouri has deteriorated. Personally, I practice and preach "catch and release only". I only hope there is a way to enforce these new regulations if adopted. Thank you all for your hard work.

I'd like to see an increase in the 15" length limit to 18" if the goal is to have one length limit for consistency sakes. I caught my first 18" Smallmouth Bass about 10 days ago and it was one of the greatest thrills I've ever had fishing. I chose to fish the special management section of the Gasconade for that very reason. I figured the higher length limit would give me a better opportunity to catch a big fish. From what I understand that is the case, that section of the Gasconade has a higher percentage of big fish when compared to other areas of the river. If an 18" length limit would protect these fish and give people more opportunities to experience the thrill of catching a big Smallmouth I think that's what should be done, for us and future generations to come.

Statewide limits and minimum lengths are a good idea and I fully support this option.

Sir, Madam, Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes in Smallmouth Bass and Goggle Eye regulations. My comments are based on more than thirty years' experience fishing for Smallmouth in the Ozarks including two days spent on lower Big Piney and five days on the SBSMA section of Gasconade this month. I also have extensive experience fishing for Smallmouth Bass in several other States. General Comment: I applaud your effort to improve stream bass fishing through fisherman management, there is no doubt stream Smallmouth fishing is among the greatest angling experiences available in north America. I feel the decades-old 6/12 reregulation is horribly inadequate given the increase in angling pressure, access and boat technology. In my experience the ability of many Ozark streams to produce quality fish would be greatly enhanced by stricter harvest regulations and enforcement. I suggest 2/15 state wide along with increasing the quantity and length of the special management areas. Goggle Eye: I suggest

8" state wide. Current River: I suggest extending the upper end of the special management area to HWY 19 and maintaining the 1/18 limit of the current SBSMA. Jacks Fork: Extending the SBSMA down to Two Rivers is a no brainer, I suggest doing this and maintaining the 1/18 limit of the current SBSMA. Big Piney: Extending the SBSMA down to the confluence is also a good idea. I suggest a continuous area through the fort as well as maintaining the 1/18 limit of the current SBSMA. Meramec: In my opinion this river's fishery needs the greatest protection and has the greatest opportunity for improvement. It's very disheartening to fish the incredible habitat of the middle river and have a hard time catching anything better than 12-13 inches. Good grief if the bass fishery from HWY 8, Steelville to HWY 30 St Clair had 1/18 and increased enforcement especially during gigging season it may well be the best bass stream in the Midwest.

Thank you, M.F.

I plan on attending 2 of the upcoming meetings. I would like to discuss the studies that resulted in no change to the state minimum length limit. I am very much in support of C&R or at least statewide length limits similar to trophy areas. But most importantly I would like to read the research and data before the meeting. Why isn't MDC publishing some data/report that we can read before the meeting? How will I know which questions to ask before I have had a chance to look at the data?

I previously commented but I would like to add something. I fished the Jacks Fork last week in the smallmouth special management area. I caught a lot of big fish including an 18 incher. All total I caught 7 or 8 over 15 inches. I don't think these fish would be there if not for the current 18" regulation. Please don't change this!

I fish Caster River in Marquand Mo where tag study was performed 40 times a year. I own home on the river and observe weekly fishing habits of both wade fishermen and boat. I watch fishermen and talk to them about their stringers of fish. I am 100 percent catch and release and advertise this on river. Three groups of people I see. Novice family fishing people that typically don't keep fish, but kill many because they don't know how to release properly. Catch and release fishermen are the second group, who occasionally kill fish with deep hook. Third group is meat fishermen, this group brags about culling the limit of 6 fish. My home is right before a takeout point so my fishing hole is the last spot to catch a big one to replace smaller ones on stringers. I see this done so many times and it is very upsetting. The fish released is almost always dead in the 12 inch range. I recommend a 14" limit of 4 smallmouth and a 7" goggle eye 4 fish limit. Furthermore I think the rules for culling out fish should be marketed as a bad thing, since river fish don't live after being put on a stringer and dragged around in the water. Four 14" bass fillet out to more meat than 6 12" bass. Sell the campaign on "More Meat" "Less Cleaning of Fish" I think that would be a win for both Meat and Sport fishing.

I realize that culling is hard to enforce, but I think a negative marketing campaign with signs at river access points would be helpful. One more thing. Do we really need the limb lines that are

unmanned in river? This represents like less than 5% of fishermen. What is the fun of unattended fishing? IF you want to catch fish you need to show up to the event. Thank you and keep up the good work.

Extend the Meramec trophy smallmouth management area downstream of the existing area, instead of upstream as currently proposed.

I attended the Open House at Valley Park last night and enjoyed the opportunity to talk with MDC biologists and agents. It was a great opportunity that we don't often get to discuss regulations changes for the fish we love so much. So let me start by saying thank you for being willing to listen to public opinion. I hope you take it to heart. I've sent some comments in already but after last night's discussions I have a few more that I'd like to share. One of my major concerns is the Black River system in Southeast Missouri. It is pretty obvious and well-know that a vast majority of Smallmouth Bass migrate to the upper end of Clearwater Lake in the winter. This is grouping an extremely large segment of the Black River's smallmouth population in a small area where they are very vulnerable to exploitation and poachers. With the amount of information available online these days, there are tons of people aware of this and tons of large smallmouth are being caught and kept throughout the winter. I would love to see more protection for these fish. Catch and Release only on the upper end of Clearwater between October 1 and March 15 would be ideal in my eyes. Or maybe lower the possession limit to 2 or 3 instead of 5 fish during this timeframe. Or only allow 1 smallmouth to be kept as part of your limit instead of 5. Then the key is to patrol as often as possible. The presence of MDC agents can help deter poachers! The Black River is one of if not the only river system in our state where the vast majority of the smallmouth population migrates and winter in one area (upper end of Clearwater Lake). These fish need protection! I strongly believe that you should keep the 18" MLL on the special management sections that currently have it. Lowering this to 15" for the convenience of casual fisherman makes no sense to me. If fishermen who plan on keeping fish can't do their homework ahead of time to understand the regulations and sections of stream that they apply to, then that is their fault. Educating yourself is part of being an ethical and responsible outdoorsman. Don't lower it just to make it easier for the meat fishermen who don't want to educate themselves.

I would love to see more patrolling on the gigging sections of the Meramec, Gasconade, and Current. There is a LOT of illegal gigging of smallmouth, largemouth, and walleye taking place on these streams. And it is not taking place right next to public ramps. I urge the MDC to proactively patrol at night away from the public ramps and pop in on some gravel bar fish fries. Don't wait until you necessarily catch someone in the act. Proactively check anglers before they kill big smallmouth. This is a very real and a very impactful problem we have here in the Ozarks. It is really damaging our Big smallmouth populations. We see it firsthand every Winter. The section of the Meramec below Sand Ford is one section that receives quite a bit of illegal gigging and poaching. Please, please, please be proactive and put some fear in the minds of the poachers. This is a huge problem! Lastly, I want to say thank you for all that you do. I know the MDC

doesn't have a ton of resources but the ethical fishermen and outdoorsmen in our state appreciate what you do! Smallmouth Bass are one of my passions and I honestly believe that our streams have the potential to produce good numbers of large fish. I hope you see that potential too. Because the scientific data is sometimes skewed and doesn't show the entire picture. Sometimes it takes thinking outside the box to improve things. Thank You, P.M.

MDC is to be commended for past and future regulations to protect Smallmouth Bass and Rock Bass. The regulations on Spotted Bass in the Meramec watershed are especially good. Was hoping the addition to the Meramec special Smallmouth zone would go downstream a significant distance, so I was disappointed to see the proposed addition was upstream (the trout zone where all fish are already protected by a regulation prohibiting live bait and soft plastics). I believe an extension of the Meramec Smallmouth area downstream would be beneficial to Smallmouth and to anglers. Having special waters closer to St. Louis would be of great benefit to St. Louis area anglers, who probably favor catch-and-release more. St. Louis area anglers are near the Big River area, but the Big has less prime habitat than the Meramec, and is muddy more often than the Meramec, making it difficult to fish for Bass. The Meramec between Bird's Nest and Sand Ford has a lot of potential great Smallmouth habitat. I believe extending the zone downstream to Sand Ford would increase the number of Smallmouth over 12 inches as well as over 15 inches. The current 15 mile zone has some good holes, but has a lot of long shallow stretches, plus a high concentration of float operations near Highway 19 results in reduced log cover as people cut logs in the water. Downstream stretches should be able to support an increase in large Bass because of more deep holes and more cover. I'm sure many Smallmouth anglers favor giving special Smallmouth regulations to the entire Meramec. Anglers who want to eat Black Bass in the watershed can harvest Spotted Bass in season if they can identify the species. The Meramec also has good populations of Bluegill and other species available for anglers to consume. Smallmouth populations seem vulnerable with the 12 inch, 6 fish rule because even if the vast majority of anglers release Smallmouth, a meat angler might keep multiple 12"+ fish, and because Smallmouth tend to be homebodies, they are unlikely to be "replaced" by Smallmouth from other sections of the river.

I wanted to thank you for your Open House Oct 8 at Powder Valley, it was informative and I had a chance to voice my opinion. I believed the regulations will help the smallmouth bass and rock bass to increase their numbers and bigger fish. I still don't like six limits on smallmouth. I think two 15 inch is just as good as 6 12 inch fish.

I applaud your attempts to control bass management. I raised LMB in South Dakota and SMB in Missouri with the USFWS. LMB are relatively easy as compared to SMB and therein lies the problem. In McDonald Co. we have experienced extensive logging so as to compromise the watershed to the point of spring regeneration is very low. When we do get rains, the streams come up and then fall back quickly causing harm to any nesting success. When you change land use as has been done and in conjunction with increased fertilizer/litter use and pesticide use it has

caused a "perfect storm" as such to success for future generations of bass spawning efforts. I can also attest to numerous disturbances by landowners of gravel mining, ATV traffic and even stream use by recreational visitors. All the above instances will surely lower success at bass growth through multiple causes to include nest loss, forage loss, siltation problems and environmental stresses of pollution. As to rock bass, I have personally caught as many as 7 bass in one root wad. I never keep any fish when I occasionally fish, but with this species it is no wonder numbers have declined when a whole "family" can so easily be caught. A simple analogy is when quail hunting you never shoot a covey of quail down to only a few birds as survival will be minimal. My only suggestion is to apply reasonable limits on possession, educate children and adults on bass as to them being top predator and needing more pristine environment to thrive, landowner concern through 4H, Farm Bureau, or other related extension efforts. Lastly, I would say that because we, mankind, are basically greedy in nature we will only see the species decline in quality and numbers unless more game agents are in place to protect the environment and educate our justice system to better punish offenders of violations. Whew, enough said and will now get off my soapbox. Good luck, but with habitat declining I feel it will continue to only worsen.

My name is S.W. First I'd like to say thank you for considering improving the Smallmouth Bass regulations. These fish and our streams are truly a precious resource! A little about myself. I am a very avid and successful fisherman. I don't say this to brag, but only to let you know that I'm not an average angler. Some of my fishing partners include A.A., C.C., D.K. and some other very seasoned and educated stream anglers. I also travel out of state often to experience better quality (size of fish) stream Smallmouth fishing, then what I can experience here in Missouri. Having said that, I would like to suggest even more restrictive regs and more miles of special reg water. I feel that all anglers, even those anglers that may not agree could benefit in the long run, if they would just let more restrictive reg run the course of time. Here are my suggestions that I feel could affect all fisherman in a positive way. First, place a 15" 3 fish limit state wide. Next, I would suggest that we maintain the 18" 1 fish limit in the existing special reg waters that currently have this reg. This creates close to a catch and release fishery. Lastly I would propose that you consider expanding the special reg 15" 1 fish limit to even larger areas then what the MDC is currently proposing. These waters have proven to be able to produce large Smallmouth. I believe if we take an even more progressive approach with these regulations we could have World Class Smallmouth Fishing on many of our Missouri Streams! Thank you for allowing us to express our opinions and for considering more restrictive Smallmouth regulations.

I've fished streams for 40 years. I support any and all research and regulations which improve our fish population and quality. I practice catch and release 99 percent of the time and appreciate the MDC in these efforts.

I would propose a slot length. In special management areas 15" min to 18" max. This would allow the biggest fish to remain until natural mortality. I am ok with the proposed changes

provided that MDC feels the data and interpretations of the data are being used to provide the best possible management strategy to provide trophy smallmouth fisheries.

I am not so concerned about length limits or daily limits because I return everything I catch. I am concerned about the drastic decline in the fishing for smallmouth and goggle eye on the Black River above Clearwater Lake. We have wade-fished the Black above the K bridge for several years and have always been able to catch a couple of smallmouth and several goggle eye in a couple of hours' time. Our success included several trophy smallmouth over the years. (I shared a picture of one with Brian Canaday at the Powder Valley meeting.) 2014 was a slow year and 2015 has been a complete bust. It has become so slow that some days we don't even feel like wasting our time to try our luck. I receive your weekly fishing reports and from April thru September there were only five weeks when fishing was reported fair, all of the rest of the weeks were "all species slow", so I don't think it was just us.

What information do you have on what seems to be wrong?

Having special waters with different regs is confusing. If there's no biological reason for different lengths (seems this is mostly 'trophy' driven) why not keep everything the same. On all streams have a one smallmouth creel and 15 inch length limit; keep the 12 inch length on largemouth with 6 in the creel and go to 12 creel, no length on spotted bass. Make all streams have a 7 inch length on goggle-eye with 15 in the creel. Please try to simplify. The trout regs are an example of how not to make fishing enjoyable. Thank you for providing an opportunity for input. Respectfully, K.D.

I do not want the length limits to be set at 7-inches on goggle eye. We have 3 grandchildren. It's hard for them to catch anything but perch. However, they can get a few goggle eye. We travel for over 3 hours to go to Big Sugar, Little Sugar and the Elk River. Gasoline is expensive; the camping fees are about \$25-\$30 a night. Now you want to increase the length limit, so we can't even catch a limit of fish for a fish fry on the camping trip. A 7-inch goggle eye is really big. We do catch some that long. I think that big is just too big. It also means, we must stop and measure each one before stringing it.

As far as the small mouth, I don't care. By the time, they get even 12 inches; their flesh is so stinky that they're not fit to eat. We turn all of them loose. On the Elk, there are hundreds of those fish. There are lots and lots of goggle eye, but not 7-inch ones. Please reconsider the lengths. My brother, who catches and keeps the small mouth when they're big enough, has told me if this passes, he won't be going fishing for either. It's just not affordable to drive a long ways for nothing. In your article about the decline of these fish in the past decade, I'd like to make this comment: Don't you think it's because of the otters you all turned loose in the rivers? You can't catch a goggle eye in the Niangua River. However, there are lots of otters running up and down the banks. It's ruined. It's pretty much the same at Big Piney, Jack Fork, Current and Meramec. I wonder if your "special management team members" are even Missourians or fishermen. Do they even live here now? If it's not already a done-deal, please let me know.

As an avid fisherman of the Big Piney river over the past 30 years, I recently attended the MDC regional Open House in St. Robert, Mo to express my opinions on the proposed regulation changes. I would like them heard in this forum as I sincerely believe they are sound and reasonable concerns.

My main focus is on the expansion of the special management area of the Big Piney. For many years now, anglers who are primarily interested in catching a large smallmouth bass have had 15 miles of managed water on the Big Piney and an additional 20 mi of same on the nearby Gasconade river to increase their chances of success. The new Big Piney expansion proposal would add an additional 31 miles of special management, most importantly including the entire approximate 40 miles of the Big Piney flowing through Pulaski County. In my opinion, this is totally unfair to the majority of what I would call 'family fisherman', who over generations have fished and taught sons & daughters, grandkids, and friends to enjoy harvesting fish within the rules by catching, handling, cleaning and eating at the 'family fish fry'. The fact that the new proposal engulfs the 8" goggle-eye management area exacerbates the problem of drastically restricting limits of smallmouth, for those who wish to eat fresh fish, as I can attest to the fact that a limit of 8" goggle-eye has been next to impossible to catch since that rule went into effect over a decade ago. (I fish 2-3 times per week during seasonal weather and have NEVER caught 15 on the Big Piney—usually anywhere from 0-6 on a good trip!) Anecdotally, the most common topic of many local anglers on the Big Piney is "what ever happened to all the goggle-eye, where are they?" There is nothing quite like the bond created amongst family & friends to enjoy a day of fishing and celebrating together with a fish fry. Given that the Big Piney expansion proposal covers its entire flow through Pulaski County, I feel MDC would create a huge unfair imbalance, serving the 'elite' angler wishing to land a trophy for the wall and/or a photo opp –vs- the countless fisherman fishing with family & friends in hopes of enjoying the reward of their catch. I would add here, as I told an MDC biologist in St. Robert, if one can't catch a limit of 6 twelve inch smallmouth on most trips on the Big Piney, you don't know how to fish for them, this includes many 15"+ size, they are NOT that rare! In conclusion, I would hope MDC would consider these "talking points" before vastly expanding the (1) 15" smallmouth area to triple the size of the present managed area, and inadvertently severely limit the many Pulaski County family fisherman who want to continue a generational time-honored tradition of the family fish fry. If indeed MDC feels the need to protect Big Piney smallmouth, perhaps a reduction in limit to say (5) 13" would be more appropriately balanced than to virtually eliminate eating smallmouth throughout the entire county from the Big Piney. Sincerely, from an avid & responsible fisherman, D.G.

Many people I know fish Mineral Fork. We all have noticed that there is many more largemouth bass than there used to be. We would like to be able to keep any size largemouth so that the smallmouth won't have so much competition for food and territory. Secondly, we fish the Current River a lot and we like to have a mess of fish. We will only keep 14" or bigger fish and

always have plenty to eat. Therefore, I think a 14" size and keep 6 is a better policy at least for the Current River.

1. I am not in favor of maintaining the 12" 6 fish limit on smallmouth bass statewide. More restrictive limits might improve the fishing on small creeks that see a lot of pressure. Water should be managed based on the size of the stream and the quality of the habitat, not by a one size fits all approach.

2. I would prefer a 1-18" limit in all Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas. A 15" smallmouth is still a dink. Why let folks crop them off a 15.25" if you are aiming to improve the size structure? No guarantee of catching an 18" smallie on any of the areas where that regulation is in effect now, but the odds seem to be a lot better than most of the other areas in the state. 3.

Rock bass, I'm fine with your proposal. 4. The Current River SMBSMA is a great idea! 5. Expansion of the Jack's, B. Piney, Meramec, and B. River SMBSBMA's is a great idea too! But a couple of issues. The Meramec SMBSBMA has always been on the wrong stretch of river. I've caught more 18'+ smallmouth between Hwy 19 and Choteau Claim than I ever have above HWY 19. Seasonal closure around spring holes on the larger rivers would be a good idea too. October 1st to March 28th? That seems to be when they start moving. Black River-We a SMBSMA on the Black River above Clearwater Lake, and some protection on the upper end of Clearwater Lake in the winter time. Those fish run out of the Black and get fat on shad in the winter, move back up in the Summer. I think it could be pretty awesome big smallmouth fishery. Not bad now though.

I would like to commend the staff at the MDC for the amount of work they have done gathering data for these new smallmouth and goggle-eye proposals and for also recognizing the need to further protect smallmouth and goggle-eye in order to provide better fisheries for all Missourians and guests. I strongly support ALL of the proposed regulations and expansion/creation of SMAs mentioned in this proposal. However, I especially want to draw attention to several more areas that I believe warrant further protection in addition to your proposed SMAs; I feel that the Current River proposed SMA needs to be extended upstream to at least Round Spring. The Current River has the potential to grow large smallmouth, but needs more management due to the combination of recreational floaters and serious fishermen. Another suggestion I would like to make is extended the proposed SMA on the Meramec down to Onondaga Cave. I would also suggest creating two more SMAs on the Huzzah River from Harper Slab to the confluence with the Meramec, and on the Courtois River From Hwy 8 downstream to its confluence with the Huzzah. These 3 stretches of Rivers represent some of the best, and most heavily fished, smallmouth streams in the state. I believe that you would find a broad range of interests that includes smallmouth fishermen, canoe liveries, and professional guides that would support these proposed SMAs. Last of all, I would like to suggest adding a SMA for most of the Bourbeuse River, from Highway 19 to the confluence with the Meramec. I know that the Bourbeuse has some of the best smallmouth fishing in the state and there are currently no special regulations on its entire length. It suffers heavily from the invasion of Kentucky spotted bass and possesses

good smallmouth habitat. In regards to Goggle-eyed bass, I support a statewide 8-inch MLL in order to protect these shorter-lived, slower-growing fish. They have been historically harvested in high numbers by local fishermen for their easy catchability and good table fare, and this is reflected in their statewide decline. I believe that if we expand the current proposed SMAs to the suggestions that I have outlined here, it will set Missouri up to be a premier smallmouth recreation destination in about 10-15 years or so. Just to reiterate, I firmly support ALL of the proposed regulations and SMAs, and would encourage your department to consider my suggestions above to further protect one of our states great natural resources for generations to come.

Goggle eye: I would like to see a state wide 8 inch minimum length limit and reduce the creel to 10 from 15. Streams and rivers provide the vast majority of Goggle eye creels. Streams and rivers are also more fragile and more susceptible to over harvest. I'm not suggesting that is happening though. Goggle eye can be prolific spawners and the harvest of this fine fish is growing in popularity. I feel it is best for the resource and the fairest for those that enjoy its harvest.

Smallmouth: This is a touchy issue. Certain organizations and other such groups, though in the minority, would like to see a zero harvest of this fish. That is not healthy for the species or the biodiversity of the streams. It can be and is a difficult balancing act to develop a positive management plan that will protect the resource, those that want to harvest the resource, and those that want an increase of both the end size and population with less or zero harvest. I would like to propose a regulation that will address all three. Black bass - On unimpounded waters, Daily limit - 6 in the aggregate. Only one (1), may exceed 15 inches. Except - Spotted bass in the Meramec, Big, and Bourbeuse, the daily limit is increased to twelve (12), with no length limits. No Black bass may be in possession on these waters from November 1 through the last Sunday in May. Except - Spotted bass in the Meramec, Big, and Bourbeuse. It is my belief that a regulation of this type will have a 3-pronged effect. It will help to protect the resource as it has since 1961 when harvest protection was first implemented. It will promote increased growth rates and population increases in fish 15 inches and greater by not only adding protection but also increasing the available forage normally consumed by younger class fish that are more active. It will still allow harvest of younger class, better tasting, fish and keeping stream biodiversity healthy. This will also simplify and streamline the numerous special regulations of certain stretches of streams. Visiting fisherman may inadvertently be unknowingly in violation by being in a special regulation area. With this type regulation, we are virtually still achieving the same results as with those established in the SBBSMA's.

I non-concur with the proposed regulation change. I propose you keep the Small Mouth Bass 18 inch Special Management Area in Pulaski County (From Riddle Bridge to Highway D in Phelps County), I also propose the expansion of the Special Management Area for small mouth bass (18 inch limit) from the confluence of the Big Piney (85.7) and Gasconade River up into the Big Piney river to the Shanghai Spring (78.9 mile) or east gate of fort Leonard wood (66.5 mile) of

the big Piney River. This would make a fantastic Small Mouth Bass fishing area for the state and would bring in anglers from other states. St Robert MO has approximately 1600 hotel rooms to support tourism in the area. Keeping the Small Mouth Bass 18 inch Special Management Area in Pulaski County (From Riddle Bridge to Highway D in Phelps County), and expanding the Special Management Area for small mouth bass (18 inch limit) from the confluence of the Big Piney (85.7) and Gasconade River up into the Big Piney river to the Shanghai Spring (78.9 mile) or east gate of fort Leonard wood (66.5 mile) of the big Piney River would be a great asset to our Military men and women anglers at Fort Leonard Wood, MO. I also recommend in my proposed expanded Special Management Area in Pulaski County making the goggle eye (Rock Bass) length limit 8 inches. So we would have both a world class Small Mouth Bass and Rock Bass fishing area in the state of Missouri. As the owner of Boiling Spring Campground I see your proposed regulation change negatively impacting small business in Pulaski County. Please contact me should you have questions. L.H.

Personally, I think there should be an 18-inch minimum length limit and One (1) fish per day creel limit in the Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas. I would also like to see another section added on to the James River Special Management Area, Shelvin Rock Access to Hooten Town which would add roughly 6 more miles for a total of 28 miles. I have fished James River for over 40 years and notice a smallmouth decline in quality fish caught (16-inches and up) since about 2010 to present. People need to take this seriously so we will have quality fishing well into our future. Thank you, D.S.

Please make the proposed changes! Missouri has excellent smallmouth bass fishing in its streams, but it could be much better.

I am a 40 year small mouth bass fishermen in Missouri streams. I have read every bass report I can get my hands on from the 1930s. I have read, fully understand and agree with the comments from S.T.in his report below. It's that simple, just have to make the simple change 15' and two fish for the recreational fishermen and campers. Provide a trophy area for the serious sports fishermen.

To: Missouri Department of Conservation Commissioners: Marilyn J. Bradford, David W. Murphy, James T. Blair, Don C. Bedell,

Subject: Smallmouth Bass Management in Missouri Waters

From: S.T.

CC: Governor Jay Nixon

Let me first provide a brief history of smallmouth bass management in Missouri. In the late 60s and early 70 fisheries research biologists Fajen, Dr. Pflienger, Fleener and others led research efforts to established the 12-inch length limit that would allow enough smallmouth to survive annually for river stocks to replenish themselves. Compared to today, fishing pressure was low and most anglers simply harvested legal size, giving little consideration to high quality smallmouth fishing or realizing the full potential of Missouri waters to produce high quality

smallmouth and smallmouth fishing. I played a small part in the early research when I joined MDC as Missouri first trout biologist in 1970. Smallmouth bass became part of my responsibility in the late '80s when asked to develop Missouri's first smallmouth bass management plan. It was an incremental approach by necessity to managing Missouri's smallmouth bass resource because statewide management biologists, administrators, and fisheries research biologists could not agree on what constituted a high quality smallmouth fishery or visualize the potential of Missouri's wonderful productive smallmouth resource. The initial plan ended up with two components: two major streams were selected for an 18-inch length limit and a one fish creel limit, a section of the Gasconade River and the Jacks Fork River were selected. The second part included several streams selected by management biologists for a 15-inch length limit and a three bass creel limit. Twenty years of research started in '80s, followed and has been expended gradually to other smallmouth streams. This is the background and early history of Missouri smallmouth bass management program. Today, now some 35 years later, smallmouth anglers continue to lobby for a serious change in smallmouth bass management that takes in account the entire resource including streams and reservoirs. We know how to make Missouri again the mecca for smallmouth bass anglers. MDC lacks a willingness to implement statewide regulation changes to make this happen.

Smallmouth bass management is not rocket science. It's not complicated; however, what Missouri lacks is a willingness by fisheries managers and administrators to make statewide management changes, as happen in the early '70s; not an incremental approach that sputters along for another 30 years. Fisheries Administrations latest proposal as highlighted in: Harvest Evaluation of Smallmouth Bass from Selected Ozark streams is mostly pabulum for smallmouth anglers, using an old approach designed in 1933 and 1934, which does not apply to fresh water fisheries management. It is used very little now even in the oceans, and then only to divide ocean fish stocks between commercial interests and state interests. Fishing quality is not addressed in any way by the approach. With this background let me propose a straight forward approach to smallmouth bass management in Missouri waters that will produce, within 10 years, the best smallmouth fishing in the United States. The goal is to manage smallmouth bass in all Missouri waters that will provide high quality and consistent smallmouth fishing throughout the state. More research is not needed. Objective 1: Establish a 15-inch statewide length limit and a two bass creel limit for smallmouth bass in all state waters including streams, large rivers, reservoirs, and tailwaters, not otherwise indicated in Objective 2. (The 12-inch, 6 bass limit has been outdated from more than 20 years as more and more anglers visited and fished Missouri waters. This will preserve high quality smallmouth bass populations in all waters. It is simple; straight forward; and easily enforced.) Objective 2: Establish an trophy smallmouth 18-inch length limit and a one bass creel limit on selected state waters including, lakes, reservoirs, Gasconade River, Osage River tailwater downstream from Bagnell Dam, Current River from mouth of Jacks Fork River to Arkansas border, Meramec River, Stockton River tailwater downstream from Stockton Reservoir, Table Rock Reservoir, Stockton Reservoir, and Lake of the Ozarks. (This new approach to high quality smallmouth bass management in Missouri, will transform smallmouth

bass fishing in Missouri and attract smallmouth anglers from all over the United States.) ITS JUST THAT SIMPLE.

I would like to hear how this goes. I responded earlier on my thoughts and I still think there are better opportunities than what I read above. Thanks.

To the Missouri Department of Conservation and its Commissioners: It is with much deliberation and thought that I respectfully say I do not agree with your proposed regulation changes concerning smallmouth bass management. I fully believe that where these regulation changes are implemented trophy smallmouth bass fishing will be hindered. Additionally, individuals who wish to harvest smallmouth bass for a meal will realistically no longer be able to do so as a 1-fish limit is not enough to feed the average individual. I make these claims after many hours combing through previous smallmouth studies that MDC has developed. In my opinion, I feel that their past research does not support the current direction they are heading. I strongly urge MDC and its Commissioners to not move forward with these proposed regulation changes and turn areas in the state that are under “special regulations” back into the statewide 12-inch, 6-fish limit. The MDC publications where I have drawn my conclusions from are referenced below. The comment also concerns a new 7-inch length limit on rock bass statewide. While I have not done any in-depth research on rock bass I do feel that those seem like reasonable regulation changes to make. A reasonable minimum length limit is a good way to protect a species and I do not know how it could harm or negatively impact rock bass fishing.

HARVEST EVALUATION OF SMALLMOUTH BASS FROM SELECTED OZARK STREAMS

MDC recently completed a study released in May 2015 titled “Harvest Evaluation of Smallmouth Bass from Selected Ozark Streams” that uses the computer aided fisheries modeling software titled Fishery Analysis and Modeling Simulator (FMAS) to project how changes in regulations could impact the size and density of smallmouth bass. The executive summary states the following: “Simulations of 18-inch length limits drastically reduced yield and were not considered further. Simulations of 14 and 15-inch length limits predicted increases in the number of larger smallmouth bass. However, increases at five of the six sites were predicted to be very small. Simulation results indicated that a 15-inch length limit at the Current River – Powder Mill site would not only increase the number of fish greater than 15 inches, but it would also increase the pounds of fish that anglers harvest.” MDC recognized from this study that an 18-inch length limit would likely not benefit any Ozark streams; however the study documents that some benefits could be seen at 14 and 15 inch length limits. It is possible that their new regulation push comes from conclusions in this study; however, I feel that there are some inappropriate assumptions underlying these results. One such issue I have is how the model handles natural mortality and human exploitation following the implementation of a new minimum length limit. The key assumption the model makes is that total annual mortality will decrease by an amount equal to what is assumed as the current human exploitation rate for fish below the analyzed new minimum length limit (or rather the new total annual mortality rate will equal the presumed

existing natural mortality rate for fish below the length limit analyzed). This assumption does not correlate to findings in the MDC publication titled “Evaluation of Strategies for Quality Management of Smallmouth Bass” where the total annual mortality rate remained approximately the same for fish over 5 years of age (approximately 12-inch fish) following regulation changes that made portions of the Jacks Fork and Gasconade Rivers a 1-fish, 18-inch limit. I will cover more about this study later, but as it pertains to mortality rates; this study found that the natural mortality increases with the human exploitation rate obviously being decreased because of the regulation changes. If the “Harvest Evaluation of Smallmouth Bass from Selected Ozark Streams” didn’t assume such an overly optimistic natural mortality rate that remains constant within the parameters of their model, the model results would likely not have shown benefits for the 14 and 15 inch length limits. If the natural mortality is going to increase with the implementation of a 1-fish limit, in some cases so much as to equal the decrease in the human harvest rate, why would MDC be denying anglers who wish to harvest bass the opportunity to do so?

EVALUATION OF STRATEGIES FOR QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF SMALLMOUTH BASS IN MISSOURI STREAMS. This MDC publication developed by Mike Kruse and Katherine DeiSanti highlights research done on the Jacks Fork and Gasconade Rivers and the implementation of a 1-fish, 18-inch limit. As I mentioned above, this study found that on the Jacks Fork and Gasconade Rivers that the total annual mortality rate for fish over five years of age remained relatively unchanged for fish over 5-years of age (it actually increased on the Jacks Fork by 16% and decreased on the Gasconade by 3%). Another import consideration I found in this study was the changes in density of various size classes of smallmouth bass from the regulation implementation. While this study covers the implementation of an 18-inch minimum length limit, versus the currently proposed 15-inch limit that MDC is currently proposing, I think the trends displayed would prove similar. Tables 16 and 18 of the above mentioned report show the fall population estimates for smallmouth bass in the Jacks Fork and Gasconade Rivers. If you break down the data presented into a pre-regulation dataset (1990-1993) to a post-regulation dataset (1998-2001, this allows for a period where the regulation changes could take effect) you can see how regulation changes impacted the size distribution of smallmouth bass. In both streams, the number of 12.0 to 14.9 inch fish greatly increased however, the percentage of 15.0 to 17.9 inch fish decreased on the Jacks Fork River and the percentage of fish over 18 inches decreased on both streams. In the case of the Jacks Fork River, following the implementation of the regulation changes that took place during this study there were no smallmouth bass over 18 inches that could even be recorded.

STREAM BLACK BASS SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS SUMMARY FOR SMALLMOUTH BASS. This MDC publication prepared by Kevin Meneau highlights research around the implementation of a 15-inch, 1-fish limit on several streams across the state. One exception to those limits was a 15-inch, 2-fish limit that was done on the Elk River which was included in the study. In this report, there are four goals that MDC seeks to accomplish with their management objectives: double the number of smallmouth bass between 12.0 and 14.9 inches, double the number of smallmouth bass over 15.0 inches, and increase the number of smallmouth bass over 18 inches all while

maintaining or increasing the angler effort on these streams. In this study, MDC looked at areas where they implemented these regulation changes as well as adjacent portions of certain streams that were considered “control” areas since they maintained the 6-fish, 12-inch limit. In Table 4 of the report, it shows that while the number of fish 12 to 15 inches and fish over 15 inches increase under the new regulations, the number of fish over 18 inches decreases significantly by 163%. Table 3 of the same report discusses the control areas for the study. In these control areas the number of 12 to 15 inch bass still increase (despite no changes in the regulations) but there is a decrease in the number of fish over 15 inches. In the control areas however, the number of 18 inch bass only decreased by 63%, which was not nearly as much of a decrease as the area that implemented the 15-inch, 1-fish limit changes. Additionally in Figure 6 of this study it shows that smallmouth bass at age 9 are 1 full inch larger in areas under a 12-inch, 6-fish limit as compared to areas with the new regulations of a 15-inch, 1-fish limit. Another important consideration from this report is in Tables 6 and 7 of the report that shows the “Angling Effort” in the control and new management areas. After the implementation of the new management strategies the angling effort on the 15-inch, 1-fish limit areas decreased by 28% yearly and the number of trips decreased by 63%. This is contrasted with the control areas that increase in “Angling Effort” by almost 19% and increases the number of trips by 47% yearly. With this information it is quite apparent that MDC was not able to reach their management objectives that they had set out for in this study.

CLOSING THOUGHTS. As I stated above; I do not believe that the proposed smallmouth regulation changes, as they are currently presented, are in the best interest of the smallmouth bass fisheries where these new regulations are being proposed. Many people believe that by establishing catch-and-release fisheries with these 1-fish limits will create world class smallmouth fishing, but that is simply not what the current evidence supports. While these regulation changes show solid signs of increasing the number of fish less than 15 inches in length. It is quite obvious that they decrease an angler’s opportunity to catch trophy smallmouth over 18 inches. I was sadly not able to attend any of your Open House meetings that were conducted throughout the state, but it is my impression from discussions that I have had with numerous individuals who did attend these meetings that MDC did not present any “negative” data concerning these proposed changes. The fact that 9-year-old bass are 1 full inch shorter under a 15-inch, 1-fish limit versus a 12-inch, 6-fish limit is an important piece of information that anglers would want to know! Or how total mortality rates remained the same in fish populations in the Gasconade and Jacks Fork Rivers after the introduction of an 18-inch, 1-fish limit. Or how angling effort decreased greatly on areas where a 15-inch, 1-fish limit was implemented. If these facts were presented at the public meetings, I feel it would weigh heavily on the minds of many. I would suspect many business owners who rely on tourist dollars coming in to float on these streams and serious anglers who are interested in catching a trophy smallmouth would look at these proposed changes with great concern like I do. I feel that much of my comment has been negative in nature. I do not wish for that to be the case. I want to personally be a strong advocate for conservation. I would love to be involved in working with MDC on finding innovative new solutions to managing our fisheries. I personally feel that the

greatest challenge impacting our stream fisheries in the Ozarks is sedimentation and the current geomorphological process they are undergoing. It is a vastly complex problem that cannot be addressed through regulation changes alone. It's impacting everything from the habitat and cover that is available for smallmouth (and many other species) to much of their main food supply like crayfish. I hope that MDC will begin to look at more of these complex problems and that they can find solutions to increase the quality of smallmouth fishing on Missouri's streams. I just don't believe that these proposed changes will do that. Sincerely, W.T.

Appendix C. Comments that Were Mailed to the Department from September 1, 2015-October 31, 2015.

I just came from the first meeting at the River Centre, Van Buren, MO Two Comments: #1-I fish the area of the proposed smallmouth management area regularly. There is a very healthy population of smallmouth in this stretch. I fear that there will become an over-abundance of sub-lethal (15") fish in this stretch. Stop the management area @ the confluence of Jacks Fork and Current. If down the road, it needs to be extended, then do it, but not now! #2-Goggle eye-set the limit @8" and the possession limit @10. It's proven that the 8" limit is working on the Eleven Point.

Found out about it from the Mo Smallmouth Alliance. As past president, I've wanted a 15" limit / 3 fish per day for 23 years. The meet and greet on Oct. 8 was a great idea. Thanks so much.

Rock bass 7" is good, lower limit too! The smallmouth length limit of 12" is not enough. I am okay with the all Stream Black Bass Special Management Area regulation for smallmouth.

I concur with the proposed regulation change as listed on the MDC web site:

<http://mdc.mo.gov/about-us/how-contact-us/subject-specific-comment-forms/comment-changes-smallmouth-bass-and-rock-bass>

I propose you keep the Small Mouth Bass 18 inch Special Management Area in Pulaski County (From Riddle Bridge to Highway D in Phelps County). I also propose the expansion of the Special Management Area for small mouth bass (18 inch limit) from the confluence of the Big Piney and Gasconade River mile marker (85.7) up into the Big Piney river to the Shanghai Spring (78.9 mile) or east gate of Fort Leonard wood (66.5 mile) of the big Piney River. This would make a world class Small Mouth Bass fishing area for the state and would bring in anglers in to Missouri from other states. St Robert MO in Pulaski County has approximately 1600 hotel rooms to support tourism in the area.

Keeping the Small Mouth Bass 18 inch Special Management Area in Pulaski County (From Riddle Bridge to Highway D in Phelps County), and expanding the Special Management Area for small mouth bass (18 inch limit) from the confluence of the Big Piney and Gasconade River (85.7) up into the Big Piney river to the Shanghai Spring (78.9 mile) or east gate of fort Leonard wood (66.5 mile) of the big Piney River would be a great asset to our Military men and women anglers at Fort Leonard Wood, MO and around the country. I also recommend in my proposed expanded Special Management area in Pulaski County making the goggle eye (Rock Bass) length limit 8 inches. So we would have both a world class Small Mouth Bass and Rock Bass fishing area for the state of Missouri. As the owner of Boiling Spring Campground I see your proposed regulation change negatively impacting small business in Pulaski County. Pulaski County currently has 8 Outfitter that support anglers in the Special Management area. Please contact me should you have questions. Thank you for your consideration for this most important matter.

I attended the local Spfld meeting last night. I was impressed with the #'s of MDC employees present and the quality of participating staff. Actually I was disappointed in the public's turnout. Of course I'm not a fisheries biologist and I don't live with all the public and internal organizational pressures that the decision makers on this project do so I can only speak to my points from my personal experiences and intuition. To that end I was born in S Mo and have been floating and fishing the rivers for 60 years. I float 150-200 miles of rivers each year and I do like to fish for smallies. I never keep smallmouth or goggle eye any more simply because I know how much pressure and environmental pressure they have to deal with. I have a 6 year old grandson who loves to fish and for him to catch a smallmouth is pure joy and fulfillment. I hope he can grow up and enjoy this precious resource for long time to come. My biggest concern with the proposed changes (smallmouth) is they aren't inclusive enough. Not enough rivers and small streams included. The changes proposed are mostly for already restricted areas, most of which have had less habitat damage from poor river drainage management. Areas like Jacks Fork, Current, 11 point are in less damage (sitting and gravel filling habitat changes) The numerous other rivers that aren't protected need to the same or higher level of regulations to impact the decline of population and quality of fish (size). Please consider a broader state wide more restrictive regulation. Please don't let what happen to quail, re habitat loss, happen to smallmouth and goggle eye for that matter. Take action now!

Commissioners, each of you was nominated by the governor and selected by legislator to oversee and gently mangle the direction taken by the Missouri Department of Conservation, nudging it in new directions when necessary. For the most part you have done a wonderful job covering many challenging areas of wildlife management – deer, turkey, waterfowl, quail, trout, and the list continues. However, that said, you have failed, in my opinion, to meet the future challenges of smallmouth bass management in Missouri using Fisheries Administration's approaches. Missouri has the potential resources to lead the nation in innovative smallmouth bass management for thousands of Missouri anglers and for out- of –state anglers who would visit our wonderful state given to opportunity partake of high quality smallmouth bass fishing. Let me first provide a brief history of smallmouth bass management in Missouri. In the late 60s and early 70 fisheries research biologists Fajen, Dr. Pflienger, Fleener and others led research efforts to established the 12-inch length limit that would allow enough smallmouth to survive annually for river stocks to replenish themselves. Compared to today, fishing pressure was low and most anglers simply harvested legal size, giving little consideration to high quality smallmouth fishing or realizing the full potential of Missouri waters to produce high quality smallmouth and smallmouth fishing. I played a small part in the early research when I joined MDC as Missouri first trout biologist in 1970. Smallmouth bass became part of my responsibility in the late '80s when asked to develop Missouri's first smallmouth bass management plan. It was an incremental approach by necessity to managing Missouri's smallmouth bass resource because statewide management biologists, administrators, and fisheries research biologists could not agree on what constituted a high quality smallmouth fishery or visualize the potential of Missouri's wonderful productive smallmouth resource. The initial plan ended up with two components: two major streams were

selected for an 18-inch length limit and a one fish creel limit, a section of the Gasconade River and the Jacks Fork River were selected. The second part included several streams selected by management biologists for a 15-inch length limit and a three bass creel limit. Twenty years of research started in '80s, followed and has been expended gradually to other smallmouth streams. This is the background and early history of Missouri smallmouth bass management program. Today, now some 35 years later, smallmouth anglers continue to lobby for a serious change in smallmouth bass management that takes in account the entire resource including streams and reservoirs. We know how to make Missouri again the mecca for smallmouth bass anglers. MDC lacks a willingness to implement statewide regulation changes to make this happen. Smallmouth bass management is not rocket science. It's not complicated; however, what Missouri lacks is a willingness by fisheries managers and administrators to make statewide management changes, as happen in the early '70s; not an incremental approach that sputters along for another 30 years. Fisheries Administrations latest proposal as highlighted in: Harvest Evaluation of Smallmouth Bass from Selected Ozark streams is mostly pabulum for smallmouth anglers, using an old approach designed in 1933 and 1934, which does not apply to fresh water fisheries management. It is used very little now even in the oceans, and then only to divide ocean fish stocks between commercial interests and state interests. Fishing quality is not addressed in any way by the approach. With this background let me propose a straight forward approach to smallmouth bass management in Missouri waters that will produce, within 10 years, the best smallmouth fishing in the United States. The goal is to manage smallmouth bass in all Missouri waters that will provide high quality and consistent smallmouth fishing throughout the state. More research is not needed. Objective 1: Establish a 15-inch statewide length limit and a two bass creel limit for smallmouth bass in all state waters including streams, large rivers, reservoirs, and tailwaters, not otherwise indicated in Objective 2. (The 12-inch, 6 bass limit has been outdated from more than 20 years as more and more anglers visited and fished Missouri waters. This will preserve high quality smallmouth bass populations in all waters. It is simple; straight forward; and easily enforced.) Objective 2: Establish an trophy smallmouth 18-inch length limit and a one bass creel limit on selected state waters including, lakes, reservoirs, Gasconade River, Osage River tailwater downstream from Bagnell Dam, Current River from mouth of Jacks Fork River to Arkansas border, Meramec River, Stockton River tailwater downstream from Stockton Reservoir, Table Rock Reservoir, Stockton Reservoir, and Lake of the Ozarks. (This new approach to high quality smallmouth bass management in Missouri will transform smallmouth bass fishing in Missouri and attract smallmouth anglers from all over the United States.) Commissioners please consider my suggestions for a meaning full change to managing smallmouth bass populations in Missouri waters. This change when implemented will place Missouri at the forefront of the smallmouth bass management in the United States and attract not only more resident anglers, but anglers from all over the world to our wonderful smallmouth bass resource. It is time to lead, not follow. We do not need further research as Fisheries Administrations and management biologist are fond of expressing. The ball is in your court. Will you lead or simply follow?

Appendix D. Handouts at the Open Houses

Proposed Regulation Changes for Smallmouth Bass and Rock Bass Under Consideration

ROCK BASS REGULATIONS

- Maintain Rock Bass Special Management Areas.
- Propose a statewide rock bass minimum length limit of 7 inches.

SMALLMOUTH BASS REGULATIONS

- Maintain the existing minimum length limit of 12 inches and daily limit of 6 fish on streams (other than Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas).
- Propose to consolidate all Stream Black Bass Special Management Area regulations for smallmouth bass to:
 - 15-inch minimum length limit and
 - One (1) fish per day creel limit
 - Areas to be known as Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas

PROPOSED NEW AND EXPANDED SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS

- Create a new Smallmouth Bass Special Management Area on the Current River.
- Expand the boundaries of the Jacks Fork, Big Piney, Meramec and Big River Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas.

Be informed and get involved. Learn more and share comments at mdc.mo.gov/node/9092 or mail your comments to Missouri Department of Conservation, Attention: Policy Coordination, PO Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102.



Proposed Regulation Changes for Smallmouth Bass and Rock Bass Under Consideration

ROCK BASS REGULATIONS

- Maintain Rock Bass Special Management Areas.
- Propose a statewide rock bass minimum length limit of 7 inches.

SMALLMOUTH BASS REGULATIONS

- Maintain the existing minimum length limit of 12 inches and daily limit of 6 fish on streams (other than Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas).
- Propose to consolidate all Stream Black Bass Special Management Area regulations for smallmouth bass to:
 - 15-inch minimum length limit and
 - One (1) fish per day creel limit
 - Areas to be known as Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas

PROPOSED NEW AND EXPANDED SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS

- Create a new Smallmouth Bass Special Management Area on the Current River.
- Expand the boundaries of the Jacks Fork, Big Piney, Meramec and Big River Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas.

About You

Your Name: _____

Your City: _____ Your ZIP Code: _____

Gender: Male Female

Age: Under 19 20 to 34 35 to 54 55 to 74 75 and older

Do you consider yourself an angler? Yes No

How did you hear about the proposed regulation changes?

Newspaper Radio *Conservationist* Magazine MDC website Social media

Other website MDC employee Friend or neighbor Other

Comment Tell us your comments on the proposed regulations changes under consideration for smallmouth and rock bass. *(Use back of sheet for additional comment space.)*

Stay In Touch

Yes, email me with news about MDC's fisheries efforts.

Your Email: _____

Be informed and get involved. Learn more and share comments at mdc.mo.gov/node/9092 or mail your comments to Missouri Department of Conservation, Attention: Policy Coordination, PO Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102.



Proposed Regulation Changes for Smallmouth Bass and Rock Bass Under Consideration

ROCK BASS REGULATIONS

- Maintain Rock Bass Special Management Areas.
- Propose a statewide rock bass minimum length limit of 7 inches.

SMALLMOUTH BASS REGULATIONS

- Maintain the existing minimum length limit of 12 inches and daily limit of 6 fish on streams (other than Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas).
- Propose to consolidate all Stream Black Bass Special Management Area regulations for smallmouth bass to:
 - 15-inch minimum length limit and
 - One (1) fish per day creel limit
 - Areas to be known as Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas

PROPOSED NEW AND EXPANDED SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS

- Create a new Smallmouth Bass Special Management Area on the Current River.
- Expand the boundaries of the Jacks Fork, Big Piney, Meramec and Big River Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas.

MDC will hold open houses around the state to explain the proposed changes and gather public feedback. Stop by anytime between 6–8 p.m. to ask questions of MDC fisheries biologists, get more information and give feedback on the proposed regulations. There will be no formal presentation at the open houses.

September 29 – Van Buren

The River Centre at The Landing, 110 E. Carter Street

October 1 – Blue Springs

Burr Oak Woods Conservation Nature Center, 1401 N.W. Park Road

October 5 – St. Robert

St. Robert Community Center, 114 J.H. Williamson Drive

October 6 – Farmington

Memorial United Methodist Church, 425 North Street

October 8 – Kirkwood

Powder Valley Conservation Nature Center, 11715 Cragwold Road

October 13 – Springfield

Springfield Conservation Nature Center, 4601 S. Nature Center Way

October 15 – Neosho

National Fish Hatchery, 520 Park Street

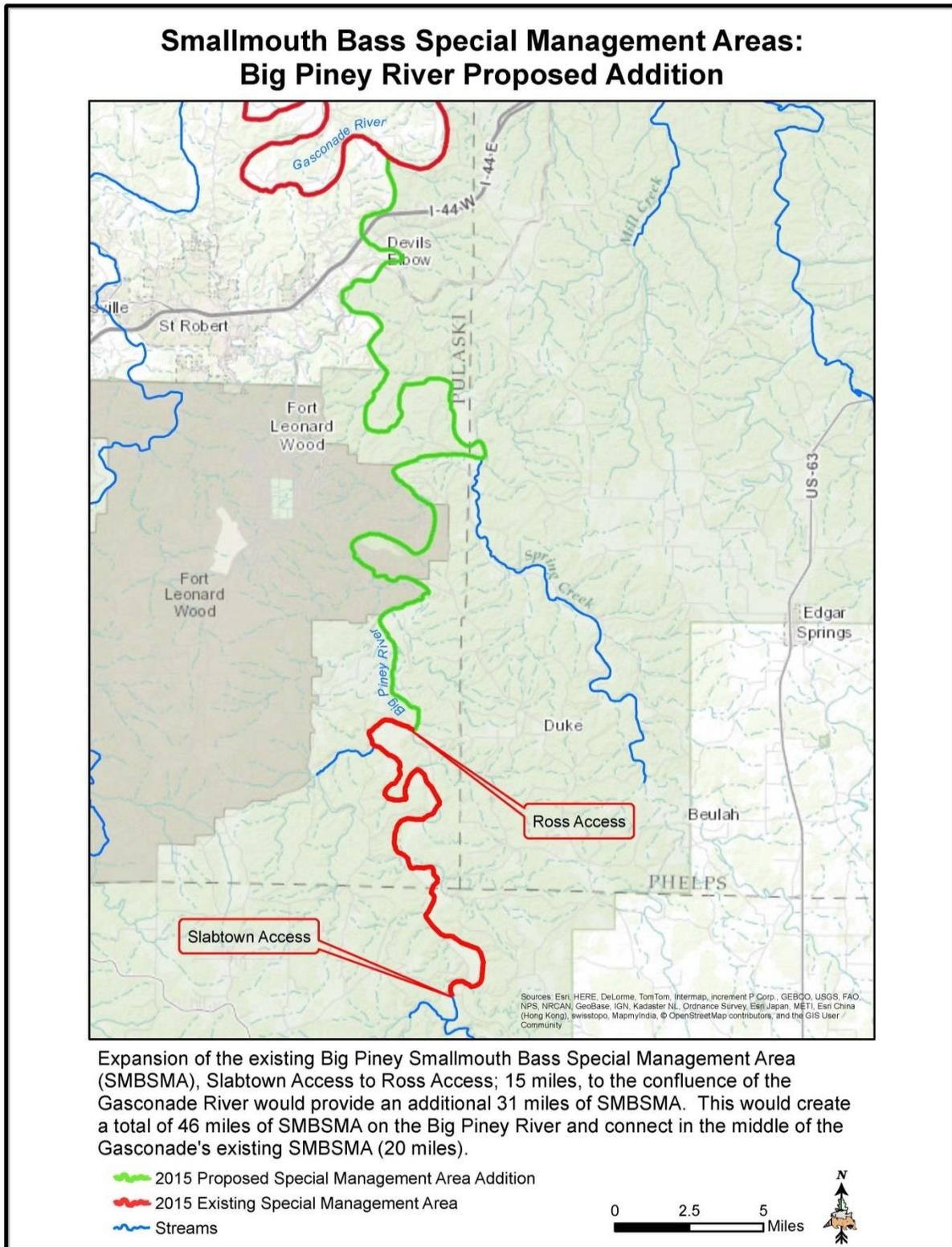
October 19 – Columbia

MDC Central Regional Office and Conservation Research Center, 3500 E. Gans Road

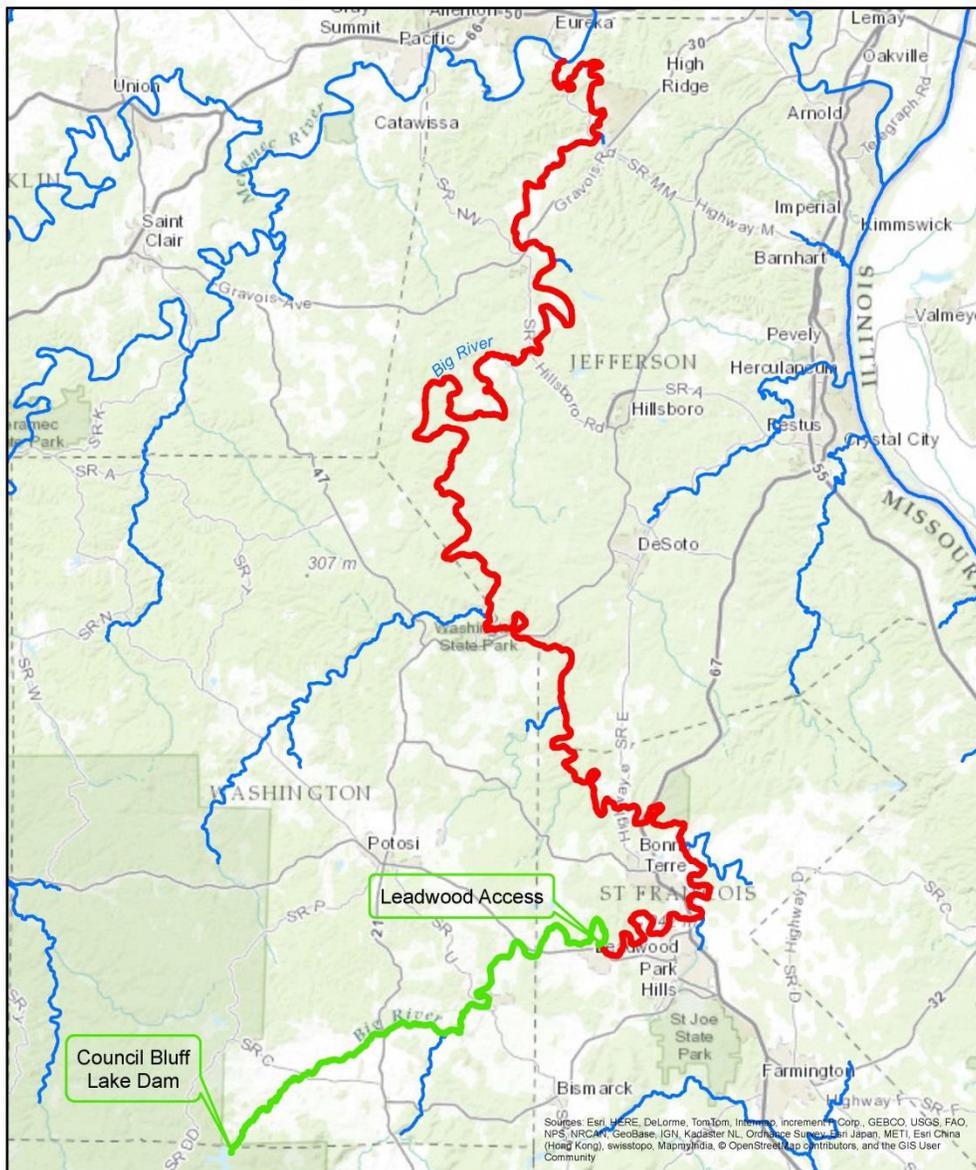
Be informed and get involved. Learn more and share comments at mdc.mo.gov/node/9092 or mail your comments to Missouri Department of Conservation, Attention: Policy Coordination, PO Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102.



Appendix E. Maps



Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas: Big River Proposed Addition



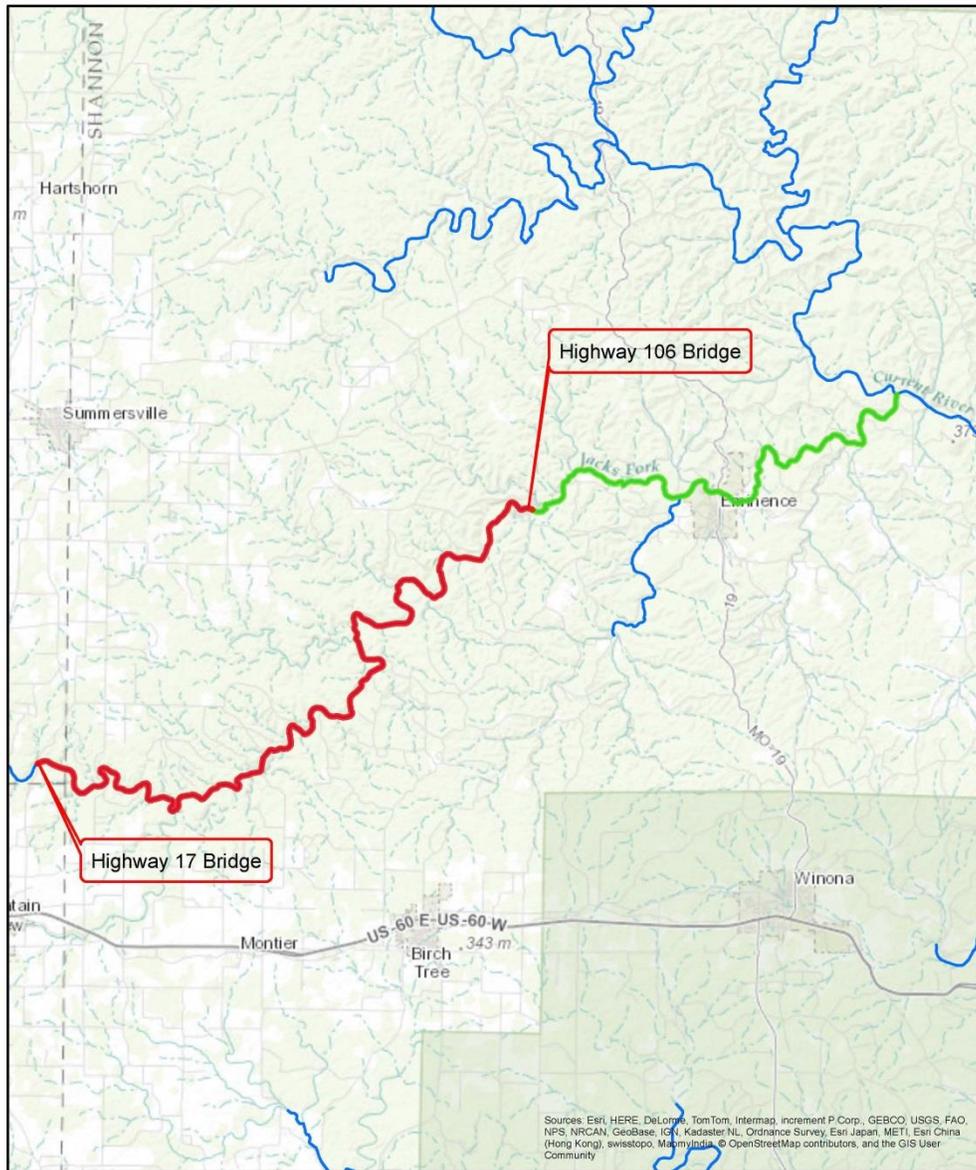
Expansion of the existing Big River Smallmouth Bass Special Management Area (SMBSMA), Leadwood Access to the confluence with the Meramec River; 106 miles, upstream to the Council Bluff Lake Dam would provide an additional 27 miles of SMBSMA. This would create a total of 133 miles of SMBSMA on Big River.

- 2015 Proposed Special Management Area Addition
- 2015 Existing Special Management Area
- Streams

0 5 10
Miles

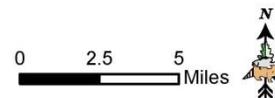


Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas: Jacks Fork River Proposed Addition

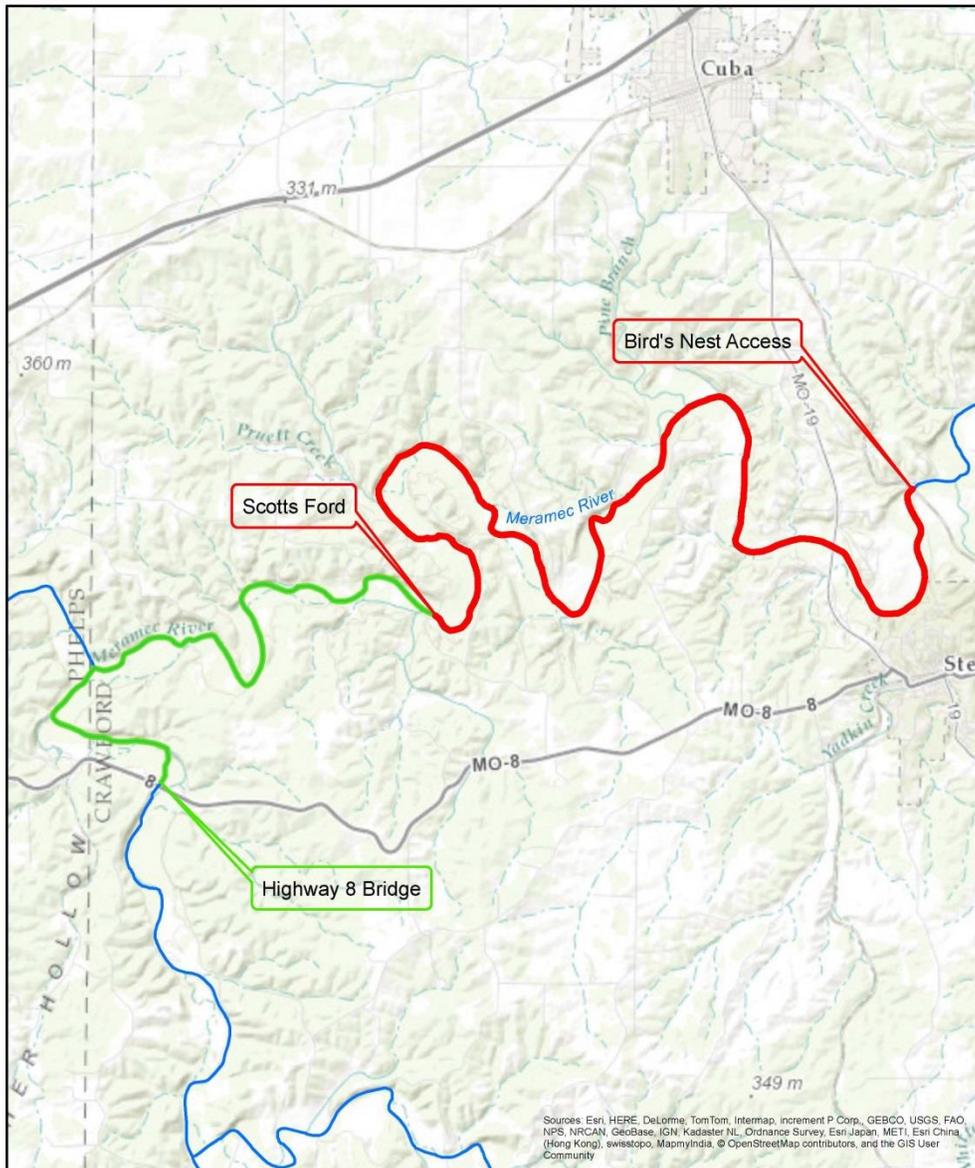


Expansion of the existing Jacks Fork River Smallmouth Bass Special Management Area (SMBSMA), Hwy. 17 to Hwy. 106; 24 miles, to the confluence of the Current River provides an additional 13.5 miles of SMBSMA. This would create a total of 37.5 miles of SMBSMA on the Jacks Fork River.

- 2015 Proposed Special Management Area Addition
- 2015 Existing Special Management Area
- Streams



Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas: Meramec River Proposed Addition



Expansion of the existing Meramec River Smallmouth Bass Special Management Area (SMBSMA), Scotts Ford to Bird's Nest Access railroad crossing; 15 miles, upstream to the Highway 8 bridge would provide an additional 8 miles of SMBSMA. This would create a total of 23 miles of SMBSMA on the Meramec River.

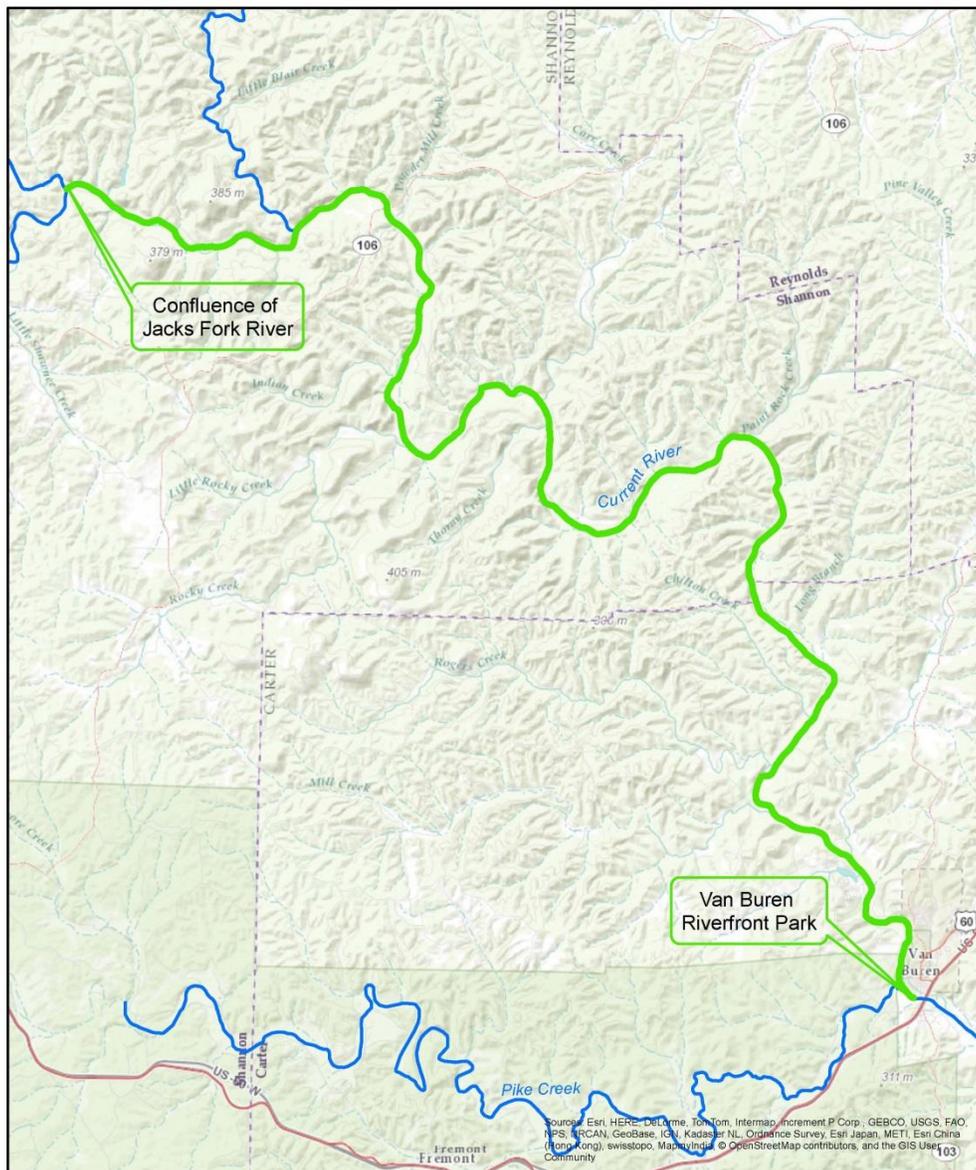
- 2015 Proposed Special Management Area Addition
- 2015 Existing Special Management Area
- Streams

0 1.25 2.5 Miles



Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, TomTom, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, Geobase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Swisstopo, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Smallmouth Bass Special Management Areas: Current River Proposed New Area



The proposed boundaries for the Current River Smallmouth Bass Special Management Area (SMBSMA) would extend from the confluence of the Jacks Fork River to the Van Buren Riverfront Park. This would create 33 miles of SMBSMA on the Current River.

- 2015 Proposed Special Management Area Addition
- 2015 Existing Special Management Area
- Streams

0 2.5 5 Miles

