Alert: Stay up to date on Maine's COVID-19 Response

March 20, 2020

MDIFW NEWS: Governor Mills, Commissioner Camuso Suspend Inland Waters Fishing License Requirement, Open Waters To Inland Fishing

AUGUSTA, Maine - Governor Janet Mills today directed Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Commissioner Judy Camuso to open all inland waters for fishing and to waive the requirement that anglers need a recreational fishing license to fish the inland waters of Maine. The order, which is effectively immediately, will run through April 30 and is intended to encourage Maine people to enjoy the outdoors as we confront the challenges associated with COVID-19. The Governor is considering additional measures to make Maine's great outdoors more accessible to Maine people. She continues to urge those who go out to employ appropriate physical distancing measures recommended by the U.S. CDC.

"As an avid angler, I know theres nothing better for the heart and soul than a little fishing," said Governor Mills. As we continue to navigate this challenging time together, I hope this order will motivate Maine people to do what we have done for generations: take to our lakes, rivers, and streams to cast a line. The great outdoors is still open. Please enjoy it safely. Maine has over 6,000 lakes and ponds, and over 32,000 miles of rivers and streams. With many people home and without many of their normal structured activities, this is a great time to get outside and enjoy Maines inland waters.

During these times, getting outside and enjoying the outdoors is a wonderful way to recharge, while maintaining social distancing practices, said Commissioner Camuso. Waiving the requirements for a license will give people more opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. Effective immediately, any person (except those whose license has been suspended or revoked) may fish without a license through April 30, 2020. This change does not apply to activities which require a commercial freshwater fishing license or permit.

Also effective immediately, all inland waters that traditionally open to open water fishing on April 1 will now be open to open water fishing. This change does not open any body of water to ice fishing that is currently closed to ice fishing. All other tackle, length and bag limits and special regulations still apply. Before heading out, please make sure you let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return. If you are accessing a waterway from private land, please treat the land as if it were your own, and leave no trace that you were there.

If you are going to be heading out onto frozen waterbodies to ice fish, please continue to use extreme caution. Use a chisel or auger to test ice thickness in several places. Remember that ice conditions can vary greatly this time of year. Ice that forms over flowing water and currents, especially near springs, streams, bridges and culverts, can be particularly dangerous.

If you are fishing from a boat, the Maine Warden Service is urging boaters to wear their lifejackets. Prolonged immersion in cold water can kill, and wearing a life jacket can greatly increase your survival chances if you are in the water unexpectedly. In conjunction with MDIFW temporarily waiving the requirement that anglers need a recreational fishing license to fish the inland waters of Maine, The Department of Marine Resources also waived the requirement that saltwater anglers must join the states saltwater registry, effective immediately through April 30.

For more information on the rules and regulations on your favorite water, please visit mefishwildlife.com/fishinglaws (https://www.maine.gov/ifw/fishing-boating/fishing/laws-rules/index.html) Anglers also have a new tool that makes it quick and easy to find out the fishing regulations on any of Maines inland waters. Maines Fishing Laws Online Angling Tool (FLOAT), is an online map-based tool that can be accessed from your computer or your smartphone, giving you access to fishing regulations for all your favorite fishing waters.

Wondering where to go? Check out the improved Maine fishing guide at mefishwildlife.com/maine-fishing-guide (https://www.maine.gov/ifw/fishing-boating/fishing/fishing-resources/maine-fishing-guide/index.html) This statewide guide features the top fishing destinations in the state, broken down by species, tips on how to catch various species, and even provides advice on how to fish with children. You can even use the Departments Google Earth data layers on your desktop to select your next fishing destination.

If you would like to purchase your license now, or after April 30, you can go online at mefishwildlife.com (https://www.maine.gov/ifw/index.html) and get your license. There are license options for a day, a week, 15 days or a season. The cost for a day of fishing is less than you would pay to go to the movies. And kids under 16 always fish free.

Last year, over 345,000 people were licensed to fish in Maine and fishing contributes over $370 million to Maines economy. Money from license sales helps protect Maines waters, it enhances Maines fisheries and provides water access on many of Maines lakes and rivers.

The Department stocks more than 1 million fish each year and manages more than 20 species of freshwater game fish. Wondering where we stocked fish lately? Go online at https://www.maine.gov/ifw/fishing-boating/fishing/fishing-resources/fish-stocking-report.html (https://www.maine.gov/ifw/fishing-boating/fishing/fishing-resources/fish-stocking-report.html)

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