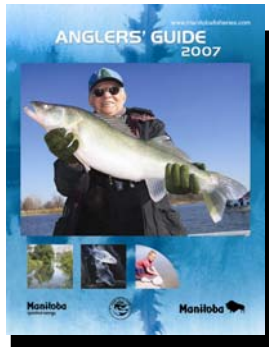


Rest. Relaxation. Rules. Regulations. With the large numbers of people fishing today, you'd never be able to have the first two without the last two.

By purchasing fishing licenses and stamps, anglers support fish stocking, habitat restoration, education, and research programs. When you buy a license, be sure to pick up the annual Manitoba Angling Guide and refer to it often. The seasonal closures, daily catch and possession limits, size restrictions and bait restrictions listed in the booklet are enforced to protect and conserve Manitoba's fishery.



Limits protect fish populations and provide more chances for more people to catch fish. Closing the season when fish are most vulnerable (during spawning, for instance) or when climatic conditions put them at risk (during a drought) helps keep fish populations stable. Slot sizing - when anglers must return fish of a certain length but can keep specimens that are smaller or larger - helps fisheries managers balance fish populations.

Slot sizing prevents overcrowding and stunted growth, and gives anglers a chance to catch some good-sized fish while ensuring that the most productive fish remain to spawn.

Bait restrictions are used to stop the accidental spread of aquatic organisms into waters where they could cause environmental problems or reduce the population of desirable species. For instance, using crayfish as bait and dumping what you didn't use in Manitoba waters is illegal; the crayfish may survive and begin to reproduce.

Many anglers are catching on to "catch and release" - catching a fish, then letting it go so it may be caught again another day. Catch and release lets more people enjoy the sport of fishing.

If you plan to catch and release, don't play the fish too long; you may tire it, causing undue stress. Simply reel the fish in next to the side of the boat, net it or land it carefully, and remove the hook as gently as possible with pliers. If the hook is deeply imbedded, you won't be able to retrieve it without killing the fish, so just clip the line as close as you can to the hook and let the hook stay in. It will soon disintegrate and cause the fish no harm. Barbless hooks are easier to remove. If you must hold the fish, use wet hands and lift it gently behind the gills. Remove the hook, then place the fish in a normal swimming position in the water and gently swish it back and forth; the oxygen created by the motion will revive the fish and you can let it swim away.

There's one more item you'll need to catch and release: a camera! Catching your fish on film is a great way to boast of your angling escapades.



Size limits protect fish populations.