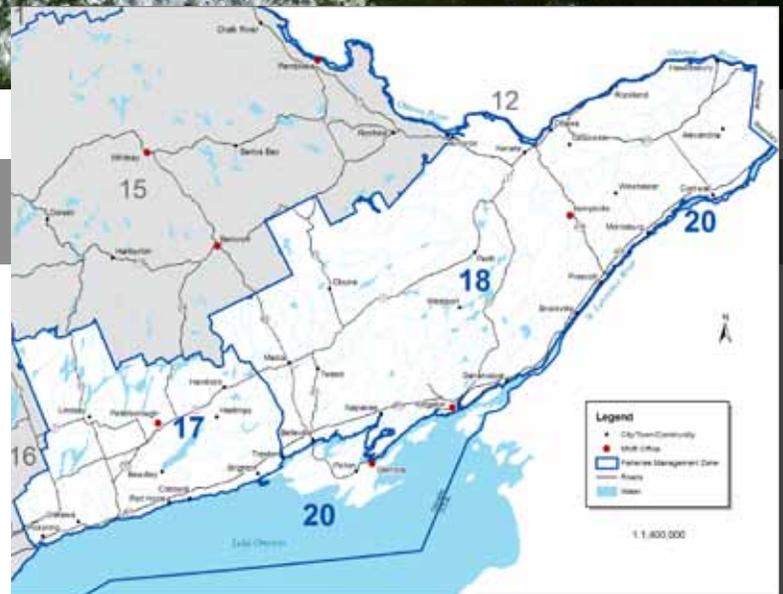


Changes to Bass Seasons in Southern Ontario (Zones 17, 18 and 20)

NEW for 2013 – Bass season for Zones 17, 18 and 20 – 3rd Saturday in June – December 15

Bass Regulation Change - Summary

Bass populations in southern Ontario have responded favourably to a trend toward a warmer climate. The early arrival of spring warming means that bass are spawning earlier, and longer growing seasons increase the growth and survival of bass, particularly in their first year. Starting in 2013, bass seasons are being opened one week earlier in Zones 17, 18 and 20 while still protecting bass during the parental care period.



Fisheries Management Zones 17, 18 and 20 where the extended bass seasons are being implemented.

ontario.ca/zonecouncils

Bass in Southern Ontario

The rivers, lakes and streams of Ontario are home to both largemouth and smallmouth bass. Bass populations in many parts of southern Ontario have benefited from an increased catch-and-release ethic among anglers, changes in aquatic ecosystems and changes to climate.

In southern Ontario, air temperatures in spring, summer and fall have generally increased since the 1970s. This has resulted in a longer ice-free period for inland lakes and the Great Lakes. Since bass spawning is linked to spring water temperatures, earlier spawning has been observed. When combined with warmer fall temperatures, earlier spawning results in a longer “growing season” for bass. This is particularly important for bass in their first year as more bass are able to reach the critical size for first-year survival. The result has been stronger and more consistent year-classes in much of the bass range in Ontario. Climate projections for southern Ontario suggest that the warming trends will continue, which should provide favourable conditions for bass.

Bass seasons in southern Ontario are closed during the spawning period to protect nesting bass during the critical parental care period. Even if bass caught by anglers are released immediately, they leave the eggs or fry unguarded and vulnerable to predation. A brief absence can be critical as there are a number of species in southern Ontario that may feed on the unguarded eggs or fry. A key consideration in determining seasons is the need to protect the largest bass, which spawn earlier and contribute more to bass populations than smaller bass. The decision to open the season earlier will protect the majority of bass during the period of parental care.

In cool years, when spawning is delayed, some bass may still be guarding their nests and young when the bass season opens. However, the effect of an earlier



season on bass populations is expected to be limited. The largest bass, which contribute most to population levels, spawn earliest and are more likely to have completed their spawning activities in most locations. Also, cool years often mean that young bass hatch later and may not have enough time to reach the critical size for over-winter survival.

In addition to opening bass seasons earlier, the ministry is extending the bass season by two weeks in Zones 18 and 20. This change will provide some early-winter angling opportunities while also ensuring a consistent closing date of December 15 for all three zones.

In managing Ontario's fisheries, the ministry seeks to balance the sustainability of the resource with the socio-economic benefits derived from them. Extension of the bass season means more opportunities for recreational anglers and the possibility of enhanced economic activity.

Contact us

If you have questions or comments about fisheries management in Ontario, contact the Natural Resources Information Centre at:

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