

DRAFT 06/24/26

The statement of scope for this rule, SS 009-26, was approved by the Governor on February 6, 2026, published in Register No. 842A2 on February 9, 2026, and approved by the Natural Resources Board on April 15, 2026. This rule was approved by the Governor on [insert date].

**ORDER OF THE STATE OF WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD
AMENDING AND CREATING RULES**

The Wisconsin Natural Resources Board proposes an order to **amend** NR 20.18 (8) to (10) and 20.19 (1) and **create** NR 20.18 (10m) relating to possession and bag limit for round gobies and other detrimental species on waters of the state.

FH-22-25

Analysis Prepared by the Department of Natural Resources

1. Statute Interpreted:

Sections 23.22 (2) (a), 23.22 (2) (b) 6., 29.014 (1), 29.041, 29.053 (2), 29.424, and 29.519 (1m) (b), Stats., have been interpreted as authorizing the department to conserve and regulate the fish supply in waters of the state while continuing to provide opportunities for good fishing.

2. Statutory Authority:

Sections 23.22 (2) (a), 23.22 (2) (b) 6., 29.014 (1), 29.041, 29.053 (2), 29.424, and 29.519 (1m) (b), Stats., authorize this rule.

3. Explanation of Agency Authority:

Section 23.22 (2) (a), Stats., grants the department authority to establish a program to control invasive species.

Section 23.22 (2) (b) 6., Stats., grants the department authority to promulgate rules to identify, classify, and control invasive species and the ability to consider permits or procedures associated with that.

Section 29.014 (1), Stats., “rule-making for this chapter,” grants the department the authority to establish and maintain open and closed seasons, bag limits, size limits and other conditions that will conserve fish populations and provide good fishing opportunities for the citizens of the state.

Section 29.041, Stats., provides that the department may regulate fishing on and in all interstate boundary waters and outlying waters.

Section 29.053 (2), Stats., provides that the department may establish conditions governing the taking of fish for the state as a whole, for counties or parts of counties, or for waterbodies or parts of waterbodies.

Section 29.424 (1), Stats., grants the department the authority to identify and control detrimental species of fish.

Section 29.519 (1m) (b), Stats., grants the department the authority to limit and allocate commercial fishing licenses, establish species harvest limits, restrict fishing areas and designate the kind, size and amount of gear used in outlying waters.

4. Related Statutes or Rules:

This is a permanent rule that follows the recently implemented emergency rule changes related to the possession limit of round gobies on Lake Winnebago waters, DNR number FH-21-25(E). The department also has another in-progress rule package, DNR number FH-10-25, which affects possession limits of other species of fish, however the possession limits for round goby and other detrimental species will be addressed through this permanent rule.

5. Plain Language Analysis:

These rules will allow anglers to keep in their possession any harvested round gobies or ruffe provided that the fish are eviscerated or decapitated or their gills removed. Allowing anglers to keep any of these invasive and detrimental fish that have been eviscerated or decapitated or had its gills removed following harvest, will align with management goals to control the spread of prohibited fish and will allow the department to provide a logical and consistent message to the public about those goals.

This rule also continues to allow anglers to harvest an unlimited number of white perch, however, it requires white perch harvested on inland waters to be eviscerated, decapitated, or have its gills removed, to reduce the chance of spreading white perch to inland waters where they are not yet established.

6. Summary of, and Comparison with, Existing or Proposed Federal Statutes and Regulations:

No federal regulations apply. States possess inherent authority to manage the fishery and wildlife resources within their boundaries, except insofar as preempted by federal treaties and laws, including regulations established in the Federal Register.

7. If Held, Summary of Comments Received During Preliminary Comment Period and at Public Hearing on the Statement of Scope:

Zero people registered in support of or in opposition to the scope statement, and zero people stated they were attending the hearing for information only. One person provided public testimony. The attendee asked if an angler caught a sculpin and misidentified it as a goby, would they be in violation of the law and also asked if people eat these fish. No written comments were received.

Response: There is no bag limit on sculpin, so an individual possessing them would not be a violation. To our knowledge, round gobies are not often consumed in the US.

8. Comparison with Similar Rules in Adjacent States:

Fisheries management rules are generally similar in the states surrounding Wisconsin. Each bordering state regulates fishing by the use of seasons, bag limits and size limits. Specific seasons and bag and size limits may differ for species among the surrounding states, but the general principles are the same.

9. Summary of Factual Data and Analytical Methodologies Used and How Any Related Findings Support the Regulatory Approach Chosen:

This rule includes minor changes to administrative code that support logical policies and are consistent with fisheries management goals.

10. Analysis and Supporting Documents Used to Determine the Effect on Small Business or in Preparation of an Economic Impact Report:

The proposed rule is not expected to have any economic impact on sport anglers or commercial fishers. As with any change in regulations, there will be a requirement for anglers to learn the new rules. The department works to notify the public of new regulations via press releases, the internet, and fishing regulations pamphlets.

11. Effect on Small Business (initial regulatory flexibility analysis):

The department expects no economic impact directly related to these rule changes. The proposed rule does not impose any compliance or reporting requirements on small businesses nor are any design or operational standards contained in the rule.

12. Agency Contact Person: Kari Lee-Zimmermann, 608-316-0080, Kari.LeeZimmermann@Wisconsin.gov

13. Place where comments are to be submitted and deadline for submission:

Written comments may be submitted at the public hearings, by regular mail, or email to:

Kari Lee-Zimmermann
Department of Natural Resources
101 S. Webster Street, Madison, WI 53703
608-316-0080, Kari.LeeZimmermann@Wisconsin.gov

Comments may be submitted to the department contact person listed above or to DNRAAdministrativeRulesComments@wisconsin.gov until the deadline given in the upcoming notice of public hearing. The notice of public hearing and deadline for submitting comments will be published in the Wisconsin Administrative Register and on the department’s Hearings and Meetings Calendar. [Access the Wisconsin Administrative Register \(https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/register\)](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/register). [Access the department’s Hearings and Meetings Calendar \(https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/calendar\)](https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/calendar). [Submit comments through the Wisconsin Administrative Rules Website \(https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/emergency_rules/active\)](https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/emergency_rules/active).

RULE TEXT

SECTION 1. NR 20.18 (8) to (10) are amended to read:

Species	Total Daily Bag Limit
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(8) Rock bass, white bass, yellow bass and bullheads	None <u>No limit</u>
(9) Rough fish	None <u>No limit</u>
(10) Ruffe, white perch and gobies	0 except as authorized in s. NR 20.20, but one of each may be killed and possessed for immediate delivery to a department service center or regional office <u>No limit but each must be immediately eviscerated or decapitated or their gills must be removed</u>

SECTION 2. NR 20.18 (10m) is created to read:

Species	Total Daily Bag Limit
(10m) White perch	
(a) All inland waters	No limit but each must be immediately eviscerated or decapitated or their gills must be removed
(b) Lake Superior, Lake Michigan and all other outlying waters	No limit

SECTION 3. NR 20.19 is amended to read:

NR 20.19 Possession limits. (1) POSSESSION LIMIT TABLE. Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, the following possession limits are established.

Species	Possession Limit
Catfish	50 in total
Cisco (lake herring), whitefish, and their hybrids	20 in total
Lake sturgeon	2 in total
Largemouth and smallmouth bass	10 in total
Minnows	As specified in s. NR 20.14
Muskellunge	2 in total

Northern pike	10 in total
Panfish	50 in total
Rock bass, white bass, yellow bass, white perch, bullheads, and rough fish	No limit
Ruffe and gobies	1 of each which has been killed and possessed only for immediate delivery to a department service center or regional office <u>No limit but each must be immediately eviscerated or decapitated or their gills must be removed</u>
Shovelnose sturgeon	6 in total
Trout and salmon	10 in total from inland waters except that only 4 may be lake trout, and 10 in total from outlying waters except that only 4 may be lake trout
Walleye, sauger, and their hybrids	10 in total
<u>White perch from inland waters</u>	<u>No limit but each must be immediately eviscerated or decapitated or their gills must be removed</u>
White perch from Lake Superior, Lake Michigan and all other outlying waters	<u>No limit</u>
<u>Any other species of fish not listed above but defined as "Prohibited" or "Restricted" in NR 40</u>	<u>No limit but each must be immediately eviscerated or decapitated or their gills must be removed</u>

SECTION 4. EFFECTIVE DATE. This rule takes effect on the first day of the month following publication in the Wisconsin Administrative Register as provided in s. 227.22 (2) (intro.), Stats.

SECTION 5. BOARD ADOPTION. This rule was approved and adopted by the State of Wisconsin Natural Resources Board on [DATE].

Dated at Madison, Wisconsin _____

State of Wisconsin
Department of Natural Resources

BY _____

Steven Little, Deputy Secretary
For Karen Hyun, Ph.D., Secretary