TPWD News Release — March 29, 2012

TPWD Adopts Rules to Curb Spread of Exotic Species

AUSTIN – The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission adopted new rules designed to prevent further spread of exotic aquatic species into Texas waterways as part of the 2012-12 Statewide Fishing Proclamation.

The changes require anglers and boaters to take action to prevent the spread of zebra mussels, and silver and bighead carp. The new regulations prohibit the transport of live, non-game fishes from the Red River below Lake Texoma downstream to the Arkansas border, Big Cypress Bayou downstream of Ferrell’s Bridge Dam on Lake O’ the Pines (including the Texas waters of Caddo Lake), and the Sulphur River downstream of the Lake Wright Patman dam. Collection and use of nongame fishes for bait on those water bodies would still be legal.

In addition, as a precaution against incidental transfer of zebra mussels larvae known as veligers, the Commission approved rules exempting boaters from the application of certain exotic species regulations provided all bait buckets, live wells, bilges, and any other receptacles, containers, or systems that could contain water are emptied prior to departure from following designated water bodies. This regulation applies to the Red River from the I-44 bridge in Wichita County downstream to the Arkansas border including all Texas waters of Lake Texoma and Lake Lavon. Travel on a public roadway from one access area to another on the same water body without draining or emptying water is allowed. Following these procedures does not exempt persons from complying with prohibitions against transporting exotic species that are visible to the unaided eye, such as adult zebra mussels, which may be attached to boats or trailers.

In addition, the Commission adopted a series of fishing regulation adjustments aimed at improving angler opportunities, including limiting the number of fishing devices that can be used on state park lakes and easing restrictions on largemouth bass length limits on certain lakes. The new changes include:

- Change minimum length limit for largemouth bass back to the statewide 14-inch limit on three reservoirs: Aquilla Reservoir (Hill County); Lake Fort Phantom Hill (Jones County); and Lake Proctor (Comanche County);
- Change daily bag limit for striped bass back to the statewide five fish limit on Possum Kingdom Reservoir (Palo Pinto County);
- Implement an 18-inch minimum length limit and five-fish daily bag for largemouth bass and prohibit use of juglines, trotlines, and throwlines on Lake Naconiche (Nacogdoches County), a reservoir that will open to angling Sept. 1, 2012;
• Restrict the number of fishing poles (to two) that a person may use simultaneously while fishing from a dock, pier, jetty, or other man-made structure in a state park;
• Require gear tags for throwlines and minnow traps in fresh water;
• Reduce the time limit for re-dating gear tags for most devices from 30 days to 10 days; and
• Change age for license exemption from 64 to 65 for Oklahoma residents fishing in Texas to conform to recent changes in Oklahoma.
• Clarify regulation regarding the take of fish in the event of a freeze closure to make it clear that when closed take is not allowed with rod-n-reel, dip nets or any means.

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