

License To Fish in Inland Waters. It's the Law!



As of Jan. 1, 2007, any person 16 and older fishing in North Carolina's public waters (excluding private ponds) must have a fishing license. Additionally, anglers fishing with natural bait are no longer able to fish in public, inland fishing waters in their county of residence without a license. In 2005, the General Assembly passed new legislation that repealed the "natural bait exemption," which allowed people to fish in public, inland fishing waters in their county of residence without a fishing license as long as they were fishing with natural bait, *i.e.*, *worms, crickets, etc.*

The new law allows people who receive food stamps, Medicaid or Work First Family Assistance to receive a free subsistence waiver through their county Department of Social Services office. This annual waiver allows the holder to fish recreationally statewide with hook-and-line in public, inland fishing waters (with the exception of Public Mountain Trout Waters), joint and coastal waters.

Below are frequently asked questions the public has posed to the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission about the repeal of the natural bait exemption.

Natural Bait Exemption

1) Why was it decided to repeal the natural bait exemption law?

The original purpose of the natural bait exemption law was to allow anglers, particularly those living below the poverty level, to have the opportunity to catch fish to feed their families without having to purchase a license.

Over the past 10 years, the Wildlife Resources Commission has expended considerable financial resources to develop urban fishing opportunities, expand access to public fishing freshwaters and manage our fishery resources for the benefit of all anglers.

The cost for managing North Carolina's freshwater fishery resources has increased dramatically over the past half century, and the cost for providing quality fishing opportunities continues to rise. Anglers who do not pay for a fishing license are not contributing to these successful programs.

The Wildlife Resources Commission's purpose for changing the subsistence requirements was to continue to provide an opportunity for those individuals who really need assistance while capturing license revenues from those anglers who do not qualify for such assistance.

"The free subsistence waiver actually expands fishing opportunities because it allows anglers to fish throughout the state with both natural bait and artificial lures."

- Robert Curry,
Chief of the Division of Inland Fisheries

2) Whose idea was it to repeal the natural bait exemption law?

The Wildlife Resources Commission's Division of Inland Fisheries staff recommended the natural bait exemption be amended.



With revenues from fishing license sales, Commission biologists monitor striped bass populations in North Carolina rivers.

3) How is the revenue generated as the result of this new inland fishing license requirement being spent?

Revenues from the sales of freshwater fishing licenses are used to:

- Expand and maintain public boating and fishing access areas
- Improve freshwater fishing opportunities
- Sample and monitor fish populations
- Protect and improve fish habitats
- Rear fish to stock into public freshwaters
- Enforce fishing rules and regulations

4) Why didn't I hear anything about the natural bait exemption until 2006? The repeal of the natural bait exemption was discussed at multiple legislative and public meetings as the new legislation was being drafted. The process for this legislative change was like any other with regard to how the information was made available.

5) What did the Wildlife Resources Commission do to let people know they will no longer be able to fish without a license in their county of residence as of Jan. 1, 2007? The Wildlife Resources Commission aggressively relayed the message regarding this legislative change by:

- Developing a pamphlet with general information about the Coastal Recreational Fishing License, including information on the repeal of the natural bait exemption.
- Developing this pamphlet with the most frequently asked questions about the elimination of the natural bait exemption.
- Distributing to anglers 3"x5" bilingual cards explaining the new license requirements.
- Developing and distributing a poster to all Department of Social Services offices and Wildlife Service Agents throughout the state announcing the new license requirement and informing the public about the free subsistence waiver opportunity.
- Providing information on this change to more than 200 fishing and hunting-related media contacts statewide.
- Updating the Web site (www.ncwildlife.org) to include information about the new license requirement and free subsistence waiver opportunity.

6) I have a private pond on my property that I have stocked with fish. Do I need a license to fish in my pond? No. Private ponds are exempt from any licensing requirements.



Anglers do not need a license when fishing in a private pond.

Frequently Asked Questions About North Carolina's Natural Bait Exemption

For more information, contact:



N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
www.ncwildlife.org
(919) 707-0391

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Updated Jan. 1, 2007



Division of Inland Fisheries
N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission