PROPOSED RULEMAKING

FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION

[58 PA. CODE CHS. 61, 65 AND 69] Fishing

The Fish and Boat Commission (Commission) proposes to amend Chapters 61, 65 and 69 (relating to seasons, sizes and creel limits; special fishing regulations; and fishing in Lake Erie and boundary lakes). The Commission is publishing these amendments as a notice of proposed rulemaking under the authority of 30 Pa.C.S. (relating to Fish and Boat Code) (code). The proposed amendments relate to fishing.

A. Effective Date

These proposed amendments will, if approved on final rulemaking, go into effect upon publication of an order adopting the regulations.

B. Contact Person

For further information on the proposed changes, contact Laurie E. Shepler, Assistant Counsel, (717) 657-4546, P. O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000.

C. Statutory Authority

These proposed amendments are published under the statutory authority of section 2102 of the code (relating to rules and regulations).

D. Purpose and Background

The proposed amendments are designed to update, modify and improve Commission regulations relating to fishing. The specific purpose for the various amendments is described in more detail under the summary of proposal.

E. Summary of Proposal

- (1) Section 61.1 (relating to Commonwealth inland waters). Effective the 1982 fishing year, the Commission initiated a 15 inch, two fish per day policy for landlocked Atlantic Salmon as part of the plan for introducing this species to Harveys Lake, Luzerne County, and later to Raystown Lake, Huntingdon County. For reasons that may never be fully understood, but certainly include the collapse of smelt populations in Harveys Lake and perhaps competition with other predatory fish in Raystown, the salmon never materialized despite serious stocking efforts. Stocking has been discontinued for some time, and netting of both waters indicates that few, if any, salmon remain. Thus, there is no need to have specific regulations on landlocked Atlantic Salmon. The general regulations on all species of trout and salmon for inland waters will more than suffice for any landlocked Atlantic Salmon that may still exist in Commonwealth waters. The Commission therefore proposes to delete the specific regulations pertaining to landlocked Atlantic Salmon.
- (2) Section 61.4 (relating to Conowingo Reservoir). Maryland and the Commonwealth historically have had a cooperative relationship regarding regulations for the border waters, Conowingo Reservoir and Youghiogheny Reservoir. Due primarily to the locations of the dams, the Commonwealth takes the lead on the Youghiogheny while Maryland takes the lead on the Conowingo. Staff was recently alerted that Maryland intends to implement

- changes to its regulations on the Conowingo Reservoir for 1997. Maryland proposes an 18-inch length limit for striped bass (and hybrids). The Maryland proposal also includes length limits of 24 inches for northern pike, 15 inches for walleye and 36 inches for muskellunge and muskellunge hybrids. Although staff believes that the 20-inch minimum length limit currently in effect for striped bass (and hybrids) is preferable, staff agrees with the other regulations that Maryland proposes. The Maryland proposal of 24 inches for northern pike and 15 inches for walleye will coincide with the Commonwealth's Statewide regulations for those species. Although Maryland's proposal on muskellunge is inconsistent with the Commonwealth's Statewide regulations, it is acceptable to staff because it is on the conservative side and should impact relatively few anglers based on staff's perception of a very low number of muskellunge in these waters. Staff also suggests that any reference to Amur pike under the northern pike component of the regulations be deleted as it is doubtful that any of these fish continue to exist. The Commission therefore proposes regulations increasing the size limits of northern pike, walleye and muskellunge in the Conowingo Reservoir and deleting any reference to Amur pike.
- (3) Sections 65.2 and 65.6 (relating to delayed harvest fly-fishing only areas; and delayed harvest artificial lures only areas). In the early 1980's, as part of modifying the special regulations program involved in trout management, the fishing hours for fly-fishing-only area was changed from "1 hour before sunrise to 1 hour after sunset" to "1 hour before sunrise—except opening day which is 8 a.m. to 1 hour after sunset." This designation has continued through 1996 with delayed harvest waters even though there is no need to have the special clause for the opening day of trout season inasmuch as these waters are intended to be open year around. None of the other special regulation programs have such a restriction. It is staff's intention to have fishing hours on delayed harvest waters no more restrictive than on other waters in special regulation trout programs. Therefore, the Commission proposes to delete the reference to 8 a.m. on opening day in both regulations.
- (4) Section 65.4a (relating to all-tackle trophy trout). A 7 mile stretch of Penns Creek, Centre County, and a 13.5 mile length of the Little Juniata River, Blair and Huntingdon Counties, where special regulations recently have been initiated (see § 65.24), form the basis for a program that is likely to grow as other select streams are considered. It is desirable to place this special regulation program under the same designation procedures applicable to other special regulations. This will make these special regulations easier to recognize in the license summary book and will provide a more systematic approach to this program. The Commission therefore proposes new regulations implementing the all-tackle trophy trout program.
- (5) Section 65.22 (relating to trout streams open to sucker fishing). For several years, portions of a few select trout-stocked streams under § 65.22 were open to sucker fishing (worms only) during the normal spring closure for approved trout waters. The program was in recognition of the popularity of this springtime tradition and how approved trout water status limited use on these waters given the extent of the stocking program. Currently, portions of only two streams (that is, Fishing Creek, Clinton County, and Bald Eagle Creek, Centre County)

are involved, and it seems appropriate to consider discontinuation of this special regulation. The need for these regulations is questionable. Some of the most popular/better sucker fishing areas on both waters are outside of that provided for in the regulations and are not designated approved trout waters. Stocking will provide greater flexibility in scheduling preseason trout any time rather than just the week before opening day to minimize problems with the sucker fishery. It will also reduce the temptation for angling for trout using the worms-only sucker designation as a guise.

(6) Sections 69.21—69.39 (relating to commercial fishing licenses). Act 1994-79 banned the use of gill nets for commercial fishing on boundary lakes, effective January 1, 1996. As former gill net licensees convert to trap nets, it has become necessary to update the current regulations relating to trap nets.

F. Fiscal Impact

The proposed amendments will have no adverse fiscal impact on the Commonwealth or its political subdivisions. The proposed amendments will impose no new costs on the private sector or the general public.

G. Paperwork

The proposed amendments will not increase paperwork and will create no new paperwork requirements.

H. Public Comments

Interested persons are invited to submit written comments, objections or suggestions about the proposed amendments to the Executive Director, Fish and Boat Commission, P. O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000, within 30 days after publication of this notice in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

(*Editor's Note*: Amedments to §§ 61.1 and 61.4 (which are proposed to be amended in this document) appeared at 26 Pa.B. 5701 (November 23, 1996) and will be codified in MTS 266 (January 1997).)

PETER A. COLANGELO, Executive Director

Fiscal Note: 48A-61. No fiscal impact; (8) recommends adoption.

Annex A

TITLE 58. RECREATION

PART II. FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION

Subpart B. FISHING

CHAPTER 61. SEASONS, SIZES AND CREEL LIMITS

§ 61.1. Commonwealth inland waters.

* * * * *

(d) Except as otherwise provided in this subpart, the following seasons, sizes and creel limits apply to inland waters of this Commonwealth and the Youghiogheny Reservoir:

SPECIES

SEASONS

* * * * *

[LANDLOCKED [8 a.m. opening day of [15 inches]]

[2]

[LANDLOCKED ATLANTIC SALMON] [8 a.m. opening day of trout season to midnight, last day of February of following year.]

§ 61.4. Conowingo Reservoir.

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(d) The following seasons, sizes and creel limits apply to the Conowingo Reservoir, which includes the Susquehanna River from the Maryland State Line upstream to Holtwood Dam:

SPECIES	SEASONS * *	MINIMUM SIZE * * *	DAILY LIMIT
PIKE Northern [Amur] WALLEYE MUSKELLUNGE	Open year-round Open year-round Open year-round	[20] 24 inches [14] 15 inches [30] 36 inches	2 (combined species)52 (combined and spe-
and MUSKELLUNGE HYBRIDS	- F	[00] 00 menes	cies)] 1

CHAPTER 65. SPECIAL FISHING REGULATIONS § 65.2. Delayed harvest fly-fishing only areas.

* * *

(b) It is unlawful to fish in designated and posted delayed-harvest fly-fishing only [area] areas except in

(4) Fishing hours are: 1 hour before sunrise [—except opening day which is 8 a.m.—] to 1 hour after sunset during the regular and an extended trout season.

* * * * *

§ 65.4a. All-tackle trophy trout.

- (a) The Executive Director, with the approval of the Commission, may designate waters as all-tackle trophy trout areas. The designation of waters as all-tackle trophy trout areas shall be effective when the waters are so posted after publication of a notice of designation in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.
- (b) It is unlawful to fish in designated and posted all-tackle trophy trout areas except in compliance with the following requirements:
- (1) The program is open to fishing year-round; there is no closed season.
- (2) Minimum size is: 14 inches, caught on, or in possession on, the waters under regulation.
- (3) The daily creel limit is: two trout—combined species—from 8 a.m. on the opening day of trout season in April until midnight Labor Day, except during the period from the day after Labor Day to the opening day of regular trout season of the following year, when no trout may be killed or had in possession on the waters under regulation.
- (4) A current trout/salmon permit is required. § 65.6. Delayed harvest artificial lures only areas.
- (b) It is unlawful to fish in designated and posted delayed-harvest, artificial lures only areas except in compliance with the following requirements:

(3) Fishing hours are: 1 hour before sunrise [—except opening day which is 8 a.m.—] to 1 hour after sunset during the regular and any extended trout season.

* * * * *

- § 65.22. [Trout streams open to sucker fishing] (Reserved).
- [(a) The Executive Director, with the approval of the Commission, may designate trout streams—approved trout water—open to sucker fishing during the period March 1 to the opening day of regular trout season in April. The designation shall be effective when the waters are so posted after publication of a notification of designation in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.
- (b) Approved trout waters open to sucker fishing from March 1 to opening day of regular trout season are subject to the following restrictions:
- (1) Fishing is limited to suckers only. It is unlawful to take, catch, kill or possess fish other than suckers when fishing on designated streams during this period.
- (2) The only permissible bait, when fishing on these designated streams during the period March 1—opening day is worms. It is unlawful to fish with bait or device other than worms on these streams during the period March 1—opening day.

§ 65.24. Miscellaneous special regulations.

The following waters are subject to the following miscellaneous special regulations:

County Name of Water Special Regulations

Blair and Huntingdon Little Juniata River from the mouth of Bald Eagle Creek (near Tyrone) downstream to the railroad bridge at the east (downstream) border of Ironville

[From the railroad bridge at the east (downstream) border of Ironville downstream to the mouth]

[Centre] [Penns Creek]

No closed season on trout. Daily limit: Opening day of trout season to Labor Day—eight trout. Labor Day to succeeding opening day of trout season—three trout. Inland regulations apply to warmwater species.

[Trout: Opening day of trout season in April until midnight, day before Labor Day. Minimum size limit: 14 inches Daily creel limit: 2 trout (combined species) except during the period from the day after Labor Day to the opening day of regular trout season of the following year, when no trout may be killed or had in possession on the waters under the regulation. Other species: inland regulations apply.

[The following size and creel limits apply to an area from the confluence with Elk Creek at Coburn downstream a distance of 7 miles to the catch and release area: Trout—minimum size limit: 14 inches; daily creel limit: 2 trout per day (combined species) except during the period from the day after Labor Day to the opening day of regular trout season of the following year, when no trout may be killed or had in possession on the waters under regulation. Other inland seasons, size and creel limits apply.]

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CHAPTER 69. FISHING IN LAKE ERIE AND BOUNDARY LAKES

Subchapter C. COMMERCIAL FISHING LICENSES § 69.21. Limitations on number and types of licenses.

- (a) [Except as otherwise provided in § 69.29 (relating to commercial fishing for underutilized species), the] The number and types of commercial fishing licenses for fishing in Lake Erie shall be limited as follows:
 - (1) **Gill netting:**
 - (i) Boats under 26 feet in length: 0.
- (ii) Boats 26 feet or more but less than 40 feet in length: 0.
 - (iii) Boats 40 feet or more in length: 0.

(2)]

Trap nets: Up to ten individuals may be licensed to fish up to **[ten]** twenty trap nets each. Each trap net requires a separate license.

[(3)](2) ***

[(4)](3) ***

[(5)](4) ***

- (b) [Exception. As a limited exception to the limitation on the number of licenses for gill netting under subsection (a)(1), a licensee may apply to the Commission to increase the size of the licensee's boat by one class and the Commission may issue a license for the larger boat class. The gear used by a licensee who increases his boat size under this exception shall remain limited to the total amount of gill net authorized for the smaller boat class under § 69.24 (relating to limitations on gear).
- (c)] Implementation of trap net licenses. The Executive Director may implement subsection (a)[(2)](1), providing for additional trap net licenses, by gradually increasing the number of trap net licenses on an annual basis up to the maximum number of licenses authorized. In making a determination on how many trap net licenses to issue [for 1993 and subsequent years], the Executive Director may consider the available estimates of fish populations and the possible impacts of additional commercial fishing efforts.

§ 69.22. Applications.

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(c) Residency. Applicants for resident commercial fishing licenses shall submit proof of their residence in this Commonwealth by showing that they paid personal income tax to the Commonwealth for the year prior to the year of application. Proof shall include evidence that the applicant paid resident personal income tax to the Commonwealth and did not pay income tax as a resident of any other state or sovereignty. Applicants for resident commercial licenses shall also submit proof that boats **licensed used** for fishing in Commonwealth waters of Lake Erie are either registered with the Commonwealth or documented in accordance with law. [In order to] To qualify for a resident license, both the applicant and the principal operators of the gear subject to licensing **must** | **shall** prove to the satisfaction of the Commission that they are bona fide residents of this Common-

- wealth. The applicant shall submit the names and addresses of all operators of the gear [—such as boats and nets—] to be licensed, including proof of their residence in this Commonwealth.
- (d) Ownership. The applicant for a Lake Erie commercial fishing license [must] shall prove to the satisfaction of the Commission that [he] the applicant is the owner or lessee of the gear [—such as boats and nets—] to be licensed. A license will not be issued to an individual who is not the owner or lessee of the gear for which application is made for licensing.
- (e) Age. Applicants for a commercial fishing license under this chapter shall submit proof that they are at least 18 years of age.
- (f) Boats. Applicants for a commercial fishing license under this chapter shall provide a description of the boats to be used with licensed gear.
- § 69.23. Responsibility of licensees.

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- (b) Licensees are personally responsible for, and shall be physically present during, the day-to-day operation of [boats and] gear licensed under this chapter and section 2903 of the code (relating to boat and net licenses for boundary lakes). Day-to-day operation of gear includes setting, lifting, pulling and clearing of nets and the sorting and the landing of catch. If exigent circumstances preclude the physical presence of the licensee during the day-to-day operation of gear, the licensee shall notify in advance the Northwest Region Law Enforcement Office.
- (c) **[Each]** A licensee **[must]** shall prove to the satisfaction of the Commission that the licensee is responsible to carry out the obligations of the license. The proof **[must]** shall consist of the following:
- (1) [For the first year of application for a license, the applicant must show proof of an investment of \$5000 in commercial fishing equipment.
- (2) For the second and third consecutive years, the licensee must show proof of any of the following:
- (i) An investment of \$5000 in commercial fishing equipment.
- (ii) At least 50 days of commercial fishing in the Commonwealth waters of Lake Erie in the previous year.
- (iii) A catch value of \$3000 from the Commonwealth waters of Lake Erie for the previous year.
- (3) For the fourth and all subsequent years, the licensee must show proof of either of the following:
- (i) Investment of \$7500 in commercial fishing equipment.
- (ii) At least 75 days of commercial fishing in Commonwealth waters of Lake Erie during the previous year.]

For the first year of application for a license, the applicant shall show proof of ownership or lease of gear authorized for license under this chapter and section 2903 of the code.

(2) For the second and all subsequent years, the licensee shall show proof of at least 50 days of

commercial fishing in the Commonwealth waters of Lake Erie in the previous year.

§ 69.24. Limitations on gear.

- (a) A licensed trap netter may not use or fish more than **[10] 20** trap nets, singularly or in a series or tandem set, at any one time.
- (b) [A licensed trap netter may not use or fish more than 10 trap nets at any one time.] No more than two licensed trap netters may fish from the same boat at any one time. If two licensed trap netters fish from the same boat at the same time, the trap netters shall clearly and distinctly separate their catch into containers or boxes marked with their respective license numbers.

§ 69.26. Reports.

(a) The holder of a license described in this chapter or section 2903 of the code (relating to boat and new licenses for boundary lakes), shall file a monthly report with the Commission describing the licensee's daily catch for each grid fished during the period. When a trap net licensee holds multiple trap net licenses, the licensee shall only file one consolidated report each month for catches with all trap nets. Separate reports shall be filed for other types of licensed gear. Reports shall be made on forms furnished by the Commission and shall be received on or before the 5th day of the month following the month to which the report pertains. Reports shall be sent to the Fish and Boat Commission, Post Office Box 349 (1281 Otter Street), Franklin, Pennsylvania 16323 Northwest Region Law Enforcement Office.

(g) The holder of a license described in this chapter or section 2903 of the code shall estimate

the weight of the daily catch before landing and document this information on forms provided by the Commission.

- § 69.29. [Commercial fishing for underutilized species] (Reserved).
- (a) The Executive Director may issue to a licensee a special permit under section 2904 of the code (relating to permits for protection and management of particular fish), for the purpose of promoting commercial fishing for underutilized species by means of devices not otherwise licensed for commercial use. Permits will only be issued when the Executive Director determines the action is appropriate for the better protection and management of the particular species of fish. Permits issued under this subsection shall terminate on December 31 of the year in which they are issued unless the Executive Director specifies a different termination date. The fee for a special permit is \$50 a year. Permittees shall file such reports as required by the **Executive Director.**
- (b) If a licensee under this chapter demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Executive Director that successful fishing for underutilized species requires use of boats or gear other than, in excess of, or of a different class than those licensed under §§ 69.21 and 69.24 (relating to limitations on numbers and types of licenses; and limitations on gear); and the Executive Director may authorize the issuance of an additional or different license under section 2903 of the code (relating to boat and net licenses for boundary lakes), to the licensee.
- (c) Special permits for commercial fishing for underutilized species do not authorize the use of gear prohibited by Chapter 29 of the code (relating to special licenses and permits).

Subchapter D. COMMERCIAL FISHING SEASONS AND NETS

§ 69.33. Use of trap nets.

- (a) Size. [The minimum mesh size for trap net leads and lifting cribs shall be 2 1/4 inches stretch measure mesh to be measured over a rigid metal rule certified as accurate by the Commission or other appropriate authority. Cribs] Trap nets, cribs and associated leads shall be constructed of twine not [heavier than number 18 thread or] lighter than number 12 thread/cord. A trap net lead or lifting crib with a mesh [less than 2 1/4 inches or constructed with twine] in violation of this section, whether being fished or held in possession, shall be subject to confiscation by the Commission.
- (b) Species. [Yellow perch (8 1/2 inches or larger), walleye (15 inches or larger), white fish (17 inches or larger), white perch and cisco caught in season may be possessed and sold.] A commercial trap net licensee may not possess or sell a fish except in compliance with the following size limits and seasons. The following size limits apply to commercial trap net licensees except that 5% of each licensee's daily catch by weight per species may be undersized fish that may be lawfully sold:

Species	Size Limit	Season
Yellow perch (Perca flavescens)	8 1/2 inches	March 1 until total allowable catch is taken
Walleye (Stizostedion vitreum)	15 inches	September 20 until December 1 or attainment of total allowable catch, whichever comes first
White fish (Coregonus spp.)	17 inches	No closed season
White perch (Morone americana)	No size limit	No closed season

Species	Size Limit	Season
Cisco (Coregonus spp. except <i>C. artedii</i>)	No size limit	No closed season
White bass (Morone chrysops)	No size limit	No closed season
Burbot (Lota lota)	No size limit	No closed season
Sheepshead (Aplodinotus grunniens)	No size limit	No closed season
Gizzard shad <i>(Dorosoma cepedianum)</i>	No size limit	No closed season
Goldfish (Carassius auratus)	No size limit	No closed season
Lake whitefish (Coregonus clupeaformis)	No size limit	No closed season
Brown bullhead (Ictalurus nebulosus)	No size limit	No closed season
Yellow bullhead <i>(Ictalurus natalis)</i>	No size limit	No closed season
Rainbow smelt (Osmerus mordax)	No size limit	No closed season
Channel catfish (Ictalurus punctatus)	No size limit	No closed season
Suckers (Carpides sp., Catostomus sp., Ictiobus sp. and Moxmostoma sp.)	No size limit	No closed season
Carp (Cyprinus carpio)	No size limit	No closed season

(c) Buoys/tags. Marker buoys shall be attached to the beginning of each lead and to the back of the crib. A staff extending 8 feet above the water with a minimum size flag of 1 foot by 1 foot displayed near the top shall be securely attached to each buoy | 18 inches by 18 inches secured near the top shall be attached to the anchor for the beginning of the lead and a staff extending 8 feet above the water with 2 minimum size flags of 18 inches by 18 inches (double flags) shall be attached to the anchor for the crib. [The Commission will provide numbered seals that shall be affixed to the marker buoy attached to the back of the crib.] The licensee shall affix a metal, numbered tag provided by the Commission to each of the required staffs showing the name and address of the owner or the lessee. Licensees shall report a seal that is lost, misplaced or stolen orally within 24 hours of discovery and in writing to the Commission at Northwest Law Enforcement Region, P.O. Box 349, Franklin, Pennsylvania 16322 within 2 business days. Improperly marked or tagged nets shall be subject to confiscation by the Commission. Officers authorized to enforce the code and this part may mark trap nets for the purpose of determining the number of trap nets being used by a particular licensee.

(d) Limitations on use. [A] From March 1 through November 30, no part of a trap net may [not] be set within 1.5 miles of the Lake Erie shoreline. In addition, after [December 31] June 1 and before [June 1,] **November 30, no part of a trap [nets] net** may [not] be set [within the following areas:] closer to **shore than the line** from a point on the Ohio/

Pennsylvania border 42°:02.5′N, 80°:31.2′W; thence 063°T to 42°13.0′N, 80°:00.0′W; thence 058°T to 42°:19.1′N, 70°:45.7′W.

- (e) Time. Trap nets may be fished 24 hours a day, but it is unlawful to set or lift them during the period from 30 minutes after sunset to 30 minutes before sunrise. Trap nets may be set or fished, or both, from March 1 to November 30.
 - (f) Description of trap net.
- (1) In the most general sense, a trap net is a compartmentalized trap, consisting of a lead, heart, tunnel and crib with wings and funnels. Fish are entrapped in the crib by swimming along a lead which directs the animal progressively through the heart, tunnel and on to the **nets** into the crib. The netting and webbing which make up the crib shall be a single sheet external panel, subject to mesh size regulation to allow small, young fish a means of escape.

- (3) As used in this chapter, the term "trap net" includes hoop nets and fyke nets.
- (g) A boat engaged in the setting or tending of trap nets shall comply with Navigation Rule 26 (United States Coast Guard) from the time the boat leaves the dock until it arrives back at the dock.

§ 69.34. [Use of trawl net]. (Reserved).

It is unlawful to use a trawl net to fish in Lake Erie at a location less than 1.5 miles from the Lake Erie shoreline except during the period after December 31 and before June 1. Trawl nets may not be used in any area where gill nets are prohibited by § 69.32(d) (relating to gill nets).

- § 69.36. [Use of outlines] (Reserved).
- [(a) Outlines shall be set with buoys (minimum size: 6 inches). The identification number of the license shall be attached to the lifting buoy.
- (b) It is unlawful to use more than one outline with an unlimited number of hooks per outline license.
- (c) It is unlawful to use set lines within 300 feet of the mouth of any tributary to Lake Erie.
- (d) Fish caught under an outline license shall be subject to no minimum length restrictions except as provided in § 69.12 (relating to seasons, sizes and creel limits—Lake Erie).

§ 69.37. Prohibited acts.

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- (d) It is unlawful to fish by hook and line from a boat engaged in commercial fishing under this chapter.
- § 69.39. Landing of catch.

* * * * *

- (b) Fish caught under a Commonwealth commercial fishing license shall be landed in this Commonwealth not later than 2 hours after sunset the same day as the net is cleared.
- (c) Fish caught under a Commonwealth commercial fishing license may not be off-loaded onto a boat other than a boat on which they were caught.

 $[Pa.B.\ Doc.\ No.\ 96\text{-}2094.\ Filed\ for\ public\ inspection\ December\ 13,\ 1996,\ 9:00\ a.m.]$