PROPOSED RULEMAKING

FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION

[58 PA. CODE CH. 75] Fishing; Special Fishing Regulations

The Fish and Boat Commission (Commission) proposes to amend Chapter 75 (relating to endangered species). The Commission is publishing this proposed rulemaking under the authority of 30 Pa.C.S. (relating to Fish and Boat Code) (code). The proposed amendment would update and further clarify language in §§ 75.1, 75.2 and 75.3 (relating to endangered species; threatened species; and candidate species). Commission staff recommend deleting the least brook lamprey and brook stickleback.

A. Effective Date

This proposed rulemaking, if approved on final-form rulemaking, will go into effect upon publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

B. Contact Person

For further information on this proposed rulemaking, contact Renae Kluk Kiehl, Esq., P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000, (717) 705-7810. This proposed rulemaking is available on the Commission's web site at www.fishandboat.com.

C. Statutory Authority

The proposed amendments to §§ 75.1, 75.2 and 75.3 are published under the statutory authority of section 2305(b) of the code (relating to threatened and endangered species).

D. Purpose and Background

The specific purpose and background of the proposed amendment are described in more detail under the summary of proposal.

E. Summary of Proposal

The digger crayfish *Creaserinus fodiens* is a primary burrowing crayfish that spends the majority of its time underground in burrows. Burrowing crayfish, including *C. fodiens*, usually occur within or adjacent to forested ephemeral (vernal) pools, bottomland forested floodplains, roadside ditches, small streams, seeps, reservoir shores, wet meadows and prairies, forested swamps and ponds, agricultural ditches, and other wet areas where they dig burrows through moist soils to reach the underlying ground water.

Burrowing crayfish are important components of the ecosystems where they reside. They are ecosystem engineers that mix and disturb large volumes of soil, which is important in maintaining plant diversity. Burrowing crayfish provide critical habitat for the eastern massasauga rattlesnake *Sistrurus catenatus* and Kirtland's snake *Clonophis kirtlandii*, both endangered in this Commonwealth. These two species brumate (that is, hibernate) in crayfish burrows. Studies in locations elsewhere indicate that crayfish burrows also provide critical habitat for rare and endangered odonates (that is, dragonflies and damselflies), especially during summer when surface conditions are dry.

The digger crayfish is a highly variable species with a distribution covering substantial portions of the eastern United States, including Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia, as well as Ontario, Canada. In 2014, the digger crayfish was first discovered in northwest Pennsylvania (Crawford County). Additional intensive sampling conducted in 2020 at numerous locations in northwestern Pennsylvania also detected the species in southern Erie County.

The status of this species was reviewed using the Commission's documentation and objective listing/ delisting process. The range of the species (extent of occurrence) in this Commonwealth is small (7.7 square miles) and well under the less than 40 square mile criterion (B1) for endangered status in this Commonwealth. Within this range, which includes unsuitable, unoccupied habitats, the digger crayfish only occurs in a 3.5 square mile area (area of occupancy), which is under the less than 4 square mile criterion (B2) for endangered status in this Commonwealth. The digger crayfish is only known to occur in nine locations in this Commonwealth. Two of the locations are disconnected from the other seven, and all locations are disconnected from populations in other states, limiting dispersal and gene flow, which will likely negatively impact the species over the long-

In addition, the digger crayfish was evaluated with NatureServe's Conservation Status Assessments Rank Calculator and received a State Conservation Rank of S1, meaning it is critically imperiled in this Commonwealth with a high risk of extirpation due to its restricted range and/or populations or occurrences. The Invertebrate Technical Committee of the Pennsylvania Biological Survey (PABS) concurred with this documentation and rank assignment. Enough information is available to make the determination that it is endangered within this Commonwealth at present. Therefore, based on extent of occurrence and area of occupancy, Commission staff propose that the digger crayfish be added to this Commonwealth's list of endangered species.

The black bullhead *Ameiurus melas* is a small catfish, reaching 6.5 to 9 inches in length as an adult. It can be distinguished from similar bullhead species by the presence of black pigmented membranes on its fins. It inhabits backwaters, oxbows, impoundments, lakes, ponds and sluggish streams. Large populations are known to occur in turbid and silty waterways.

The black bullhead was listed as a Commonwealth endangered species in 1999. It is native from southern Canada and Montana, south to northern Mexico and east to the Saint Lawrence River, the Appalachian Mountains and Alabama. It has been introduced elsewhere. In this Commonwealth, there are historic records from the Kiskiminitas River and the Lake Erie basin, as well as from Lawrence, Mercer and Westmoreland Counties. There have been no verified reports or collections of this species since 1985. From approximately the year 2000 to the present, the rivers of the Ohio River drainage in western Pennsylvania have been intensively surveyed with electrofishing and trawling gears at hundreds of sites. Efforts have also specifically targeted the black bullhead at historic collection localities in Erie, Lawrence, Mercer and Westmoreland Counties. Despite these efforts, no black bullheads have been detected.

Since the black bullhead has not been detected in this Commonwealth in 38 years, the Commission's objective listing/delisting process could not be applied. It was, however, evaluated with NatureServe's Conservation Status Assessments Rank Calculator and received a State Conservation Rank of SX, meaning it is considered extirpated in this Commonwealth. The Fishes Technical Committee of the PABS concurred with this documentation and rank assignment. As such, Commission staff recommend that it be deleted from the list of endangered species.

The threespine stickleback *Gasterosteus aculeatus* is a small fish with three distinct dorsal spines. The fourspine stickleback *Apeltes quadracus* also occurs within the same general historic range but can be distinguished by the additional dorsal spine and the distance between the spines. Adults are usually 1.5 to 3 inches in length.

The threespine stickleback inhabits shallow, vegetated areas of tidal pools, creeks, marshes, estuaries and inshore waters, usually in or near marine or brackish waters. It occurs widely in the Arctic and Atlantic drainages south to the Chesapeake Bay. In the Pacific drainages it occurs from Alaska to Baja, California, and has been widely introduced elsewhere. In this Commonwealth, it is confined to the tidal Delaware River and a few tributaries.

The threespine stickleback was listed as a Commonwealth endangered species in 1999. There are very few records for this species in this Commonwealth, and it has not been collected or verified in this Commonwealth since 1997. Despite repeated surveys during the past 15 to 20 years of waterways where this species has previously been documented, and surveys of other tidal tributaries to the Delaware River, no threespine sticklebacks have been detected. In addition, there have been no reports of this species from the Pennsylvania Scientific Collectors Permit reporting system during this period.

Due to a lack of recent records, the Commission's objective listing/delisting process could not be applied. Commission staff conclude that the threespine stickleback no longer regularly occurs in this Commonwealth. Based on Commission surveys and the historical record, Commission staff conclude that this species is an estuarine form in this Commonwealth that utilizes our inland waters on an irregular, occasional basis. As such, practically no efforts can be advanced to enhance its status in this Commonwealth. As such, Commission staff recommend that it be deleted from the list of endangered species.

The longsolid *Fusconaia subrotunda* is a freshwater mussel species currently known to occur in Alabama, Kentucky, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. It is considered extirpated from Georgia, Indiana and Illinois. Historically, longsolid have been reported from the following Commonwealth streams and rivers: Ohio River, Beaver River, Slippery Rock Creek, Mahoning River, Shenango River, Pymatuning Creek, Allegheny River, French Creek, Muddy Creek, Monongahela River and Cheat River. The longsolid still occurs in the following Commonwealth streams and rivers: Shenango River, Allegheny River, French Creek and Muddy Creek. Generally, the longsolid co-occurs with other Federal and state and listed mussel species.

On March 9, 2023, the United States Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, designated longsolid as Federally threatened throughout its entire ranges. Section 102 of the code (relating to definitions) defines "endangered species" as "[a]ll species and subspecies of fish which: (1) have been declared by the Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior to be threatened with extinction and appear on the Endangered Species List or the Native Endangered Species List published in the *Federal Register*; or (2) have been declared by the Executive Director to be threatened with extinction and appear on the Pennsylvania Endangered Species List published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*." Because longsolid has been designated as Federally threatened throughout its range, which includes this Commonwealth, Commission staff propose that it be added to the Commonwealth's list of threatened species.

The least brook lamprey *Lampetra aepyptera* is a small, non-parasitic lamprey. Adults are usually 3.5 to 6 inches in length. A similar species, the American brook lamprey *Lethenteron appendix*, also occurs in western Pennsylvania, but these two species have never been collected from the same stream.

The least brook lamprey inhabits generally clean, clear streams and brooks of moderate gradient. It is often found in stocked trout waters. Larvae, known as ammocoetes, generally prefer sluggish areas with deposits of mud, muck, silt, sand, detritus and coarse woody debris. This species occurs on Atlantic Slope from southeastern Pennsylvania to North Carolina, and the Mississippi River basin from western Pennsylvania to Missouri and Arkansas and south to Mississippi. It is also found in Gulf Coast drainages from Georgia to Mississippi. In western Pennsylvania, this lamprey has been reported from Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Indiana and Westmoreland Counties. It also occurs in a small area of the Susquehanna River drainage in southern Chester County.

The least brook lamprey was listed as a candidate species in 1999. Lamprey-specific field work conducted during 1996 and 2002 to 2009 confirmed that nearly all historic (pre-1995) waterways remained occupied and additional populations were reported. The status of this species was reviewed using the Commission's documentation and objective listing/delisting process. It exceeds criterion A.2 (population reduction) in that there has been no reduction in historic distribution. Since the least brook lamprey occupies more than 150 linear miles of waterway and occurs at more than 20 locations with no known decline, it exceeds Criteria B.3 (area of occupation) and B.5 (distribution and trends). In addition, it was evaluated with NatureServe's Conservation Status Assessments Rank Calculator and received a State Conservation Rank of S4, meaning it is secure in this Commonwealth with a very low risk of extirpation due to its extensive range or many populations or occurrences. The Fishes Technical Committee of the PABS concurred with this documentation and rank assignment. Enough information exists to determine that this species is currently secure in this Commonwealth and to justify its removal from the Commonwealth's list of threatened fishes. Therefore, the Commission proposes that the least brook lamprey be deleted from the Commonwealth's list of candidate species.

The brook stickleback *Culaea inconstans* is a small fish with 4 to 6 dorsal spines. Adults are generally 1.5 to 2.5 inches long. No other stickleback is known to occur within its native range in this Commonwealth. It inhabits cool, calm waters of lakes, ponds, sluggish streams, wetlands and bogs. It prefers areas of heavy vegetation or woody debris over muck, detritus and sand. It occurs in the Arctic and Atlantic drainages in Canada, and in the Great Lakes and Mississippi drainages from Montana to New York and Pennsylvania. It occurs in the Lake Erie and Ohio River drainages in northwestern Pennsylvania, roughly from Lawrence and Butler Counties to Potter County, as well as a few locations elsewhere in the Ohio River basin. It has been introduced into the Susquehanna River drainage.

The brook stickleback was listed as a Commonwealth candidate species in 1999. From 1990 to the present, it was determined to be rather widely distributed in northwestern Pennsylvania. It is currently known to occur in Cambria, Clarion, Crawford, Elk, Erie, McKean, Mercer, Potter, Venango and Warren Counties.

The status of this species was reviewed using the Commission's documentation and objective listing/ delisting process. It exceeds criteria B.3 (extent of occupancy) and B.5 (distribution and trends) and is known to occur in excess of 20 locations. In addition, it was evaluated with NatureServe's Conservation Status Assessments Rank Calculator and received a State Conservation Rank of S4, meaning it is secure in this Commonwealth with a very low risk of extirpation due to its extensive range or many populations or occurrences. The Fishes Technical Committee of the PABS concurred with this documentation and rank assignment. Enough information exists to determine that it is currently secure in this Commonwealth. Therefore, Commission staff propose that the Brook stickleback be deleted from the Commonwealth's list of candidate species. The Commission proposes that §§ 75.1, 75.2 and 75.3 be amended to read as set forth in Annex A.

F. Paperwork

This proposed rulemaking will not increase paperwork and will not create new paperwork requirements.

G. Fiscal Impact

This proposed rulemaking will have no adverse fiscal impact on the Commonwealth or its political subdivisions.

H. Public Comments

Interested persons are invited to submit written comments, objections or suggestions about this proposed rulemaking 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*. Comments submitted by facsimile will not be accepted.

Comments also may be submitted electronically to RA-pfbcregulations@pa.gov. Electronic comments submitted in any other manner will not be accepted.

TIMOTHY D. SCHAEFFER, Executive Director

Fiscal Note: 48A-352. No fiscal impact; recommends adoption.

Annex A

TITLE 58. RECREATION

PART II. FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION Subpart B. FISHING

CHAPTER 75. ENDANGERED SPECIES

§ 75.1. Endangered species.

(a) *General.* The species of fish, amphibians and reptiles and invertebrates listed in subsections (b)—(d) are classified endangered. The catching, taking, killing, possessing, importing to or exporting from this Commonwealth, selling, offering for sale or purchasing of any individual of these species, alive or dead, or any part thereof, without a special permit from the Executive Director is prohibited.

- (b) *Fish*. The following species are endangered:
- (1) Northern brook lamprey, Ichthyomyzon fossor.
- (2) Shortnose sturgeon, Acipenser brevirostrum.
- (3) Lake sturgeon, Acipenser fulvescens.
- (4) Atlantic sturgeon, Acipenser oxyrhynchus.
- (5) Spotted gar, Lepisosteus oculatus.
- (6) Hickory shad, Alosa mediocris.
- (7) Cisco, Coregonus artedi.
- (8) Northern redbelly dace, Chrosomus eos.
- (9) Blacknose Shiner (Notropis heterolepis).
- (10) Bridle shiner, Notropis bifrenatus.
- (11) River shiner, Notropis blennius.
- (12) Ghost shiner, Notropis buchanani.
- (13) Ironcolor shiner, Notropis chalybaeus.
- (14) Blackchin shiner, Notropis heterodon.
- (15) Redfin shiner, Lythrurus umbratilis.
- (16) Longnose sucker, Catostomus catostomus.
- (17) Bigmouth buffalo, Ictiobus cyprinellus.
- (18) [Black bullhead, Amerius melas] [Reserved].
- (19) Mountain madtom, Noturus eleutherus.
- (20) Tadpole madtom, Noturus gyrinus.
- (21) Northern madtom, Noturus stigmosus.
- (22) Burbot, Lota lota (inland populations only).

(23) [Threespine stickleback, Gasterosteus aculeatus] [Reserved].

- (24) Pugnose Minnow (Opsopoeodus emiliae).
- (25) Warmouth, Lepomis gulosus.
- (26) Longear sunfish, Lepomis megalotis.
- (27) Iowa darter, Etheostoma exile.
- (28) Eastern sand darter, Ammocrypta pellucida.
- (29) Hornyhead chub, Nocomis biguttaus.
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- (d) Invertebrates. The following species are endangered:
- (1) Northern riffleshell mussel, Epioblasma rangiana.
- (2) Clubshell mussel, *Pleurobema clava*.
- (3) Dwarf wedgemussel, Alasmidonta heterodon.

(4) Eastern pearlshell mussel, Margaritifera margaritifera.

- (5) Rabbitsfoot mussel, Theliderma cylindrica.
- (6) Snuffbox mussel, Epioblasma triquetra.
- (7) Salamander mussel, impsonaias ambigua.
- (8) Round hickorynut mussel, Obovaria subrotunda.
- (9) Pistolgrip mussel, Tritogonia verrucosa.
- (10) Rayed bean mussel, Villosa fabalis.
- (11) Digger crayfish, Creaserinus fodiens.

§ 75.2. Threatened species.

(a) General. The species of fish, amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates listed in subsections (b)—(d) are classi-

fied as threatened. The catching, taking, killing, possessing, importing to or exporting from this Commonwealth, selling, offering for sale or purchasing, of any individual of these species, alive or dead, or any part thereof, without a special permit from the Executive Director is prohibited.

(b) *Fish*. The following species are threatened:

- (1) Bigmouth shiner, Notropis dorsalis.
- (2) Southern redbelly dace, Chrosomus erythrogaster.
- (3) Spotted sucker, *Minytrema melanops*.
- (4) Brindled madtom, Noturus miurus.
- (5) Chesapeake Logperch, Percina imaculate.

(c) Amphibians and reptiles. The following species are threatened:

- (1) Green Salamander, Aneides aeneus.
- (2) Northern Red-bellied Cooter, Pseudemys rubriventris.
- (3) Eastern Spadefoot Toad, Scaphiopus holbrookii.
- (d) Invertebrates. The following species are threatened:

(1) Sheepnose mussel, *Plethobasus cyphyus*.

(2) Longsolid, Fusconaia subrotunda.

§ 75.3. Candidate species.

(a) *General.* The species listed in subsections (b) and (c) are considered candidate species which could achieve endangered or threatened status in the future. They are subject to seasons, size, creel—bag—and possession limits specified in this subpart. A person who catches these species is encouraged to release them immediately and unharmed to the waters or other area from which they were taken.

(b) **[***Fish* **] [Reserved]**.

[(1) Least brook lamprey, Lampetra aepyptera.

(2) Brook stickleback, Culaea inconstans.]

(c) Amphibians and reptiles.

(1) Blandings Turtle, Emydoidea blandingii.

(2) Broad-headed Skink, *Plestiodon laticeps*.

[Pa.B. Doc. No. 23-1690. Filed for public inspection December 8, 2023, 9:00 a.m.]

FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION

[58 PA. CODE CH. 107] Boating; Boating Restrictions

The Fish and Boat Commission (Commission) proposes to amend Chapter 107 (relating to boating restrictions). The Commission is publishing this proposed rulemaking under the authority of 30 Pa.C.S. (relating to Fish and Boat Code) (code). These proposed amendments update the Commission's regulations pertaining to allowable electric motor speeds and clarify horsepower restrictions.

A. Effective Date

This proposed rulemaking, if approved on final-form rulemaking, will go into effect upon publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

B. Contact Person

For further information on this proposed rulemaking, contact Renae Kluk Kiehl, Esq., P.O. Box 67000, Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000, (717) 705-7810. This proposed rulemaking is available on the Commission's web site at www.fishandboat.com.

C. Statutory Authority

These proposed amendments to \$ 107.1 and 107.2 (relating to horsepower restrictions; and electric motors) are published under the statutory authority of section 5124(a) of the code (relating to particular areas of water).

D. Purpose and Background

The specific purpose and background of the proposed amendments are described in more detail under the summary of proposal.

E. Summary of Proposal

Current regulations limit boat propulsion to electric motors only on Commission owned or controlled lakes, some state park lakes and water bodies specified in Chapter 111 (relating to special regulations counties). These regulations were originally intended to reduce noise, excessive wakes, shoreline erosion and property damage, and the risk of petroleum-based water pollution on certain water bodies. Boats powered by small electric motors (such as trolling motors) and unpowered boats are popular on Commonwealth bodies of water with electric motor only restrictions.

Some exceptions exist for state park lakes and certain other waters specified in Chapter 111 where internal combustion motors are permitted but with horsepower (HP) limitations. Boats propelled by small gas outboard motors and unpowered boats are popular on these waterways.

Recent technological advancements with batterypowered electric boat motors have produced a variety of higher-powered options up to 180 HP and 60 miles per hour. While these new units are currently expensive and have limited battery capacity, it is anticipated they will become more affordable and widely available in the future. Boating stakeholders, partner organizations, other State agencies and Commission staff have expressed concern that high-powered electric motors could be legally operated on waters that are currently regulated as electric motor only waters, which is inconsistent with the original intent of this restriction. Additionally, Commission law enforcement staff have expressed concern about the complexity of enforcing HP limitations for electric motors to meet the original intent of current regulations.

Manufacturer and retailer specifications for electric motors frequently refer to kilowatt (kW) rather than HP, whereas Commission regulations refer only to HP. In enforcing HP limitations, Waterways Conservation Officers (WCO) typically rely on HP ratings that are marked on the boat's cowling (motor cover). If the HP rating is not marked on the cowling or the marking is not legible, WCOs may instead rely on documentation provided by the boat operator (such as an owner's manual), the results of an Internet search of motor make and model, or

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if the kW rating is known, use a conversion calculation to determine HP. The widely accepted conversion calculation is $kW \times 1.341 = HP$. For example, a 15 kW electric motor converts to approximately 20 HP, which is a common HP limitation across this Commonwealth.

To address these issues, Commission staff recommended amending Chapter 107 to limit the speed at which electric motors may be operated and clarify that horsepower restrictions apply to both electric and internal combustion motors.

On June 21, 2022, the Boating Advisory Board considered this proposal and recommended that the Commission approve the publication of a notice of proposed rulemaking containing the amendments.

On July 26, 2022, the Commission approved the publication of a notice of proposed rulemaking containing these amendments. The notice was published at 52 Pa.B. 5651 (September 3, 2022). The Commission did not receive any public comments regarding the proposal; however, during the comment period, it was discovered that other complementary changes in Chapter 107 were necessary to effect the changes in the proposal.

These additional recommended changes were incorporated into a final-form rulemaking agenda item for Commission action. These changes were not published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* but were made public as part of the agenda for the October 24, 2022, Commission meeting. On October 24, 2022, the Commission voted to adopt the amendments as set forth in the notice of proposed rulemaking, which did not include the necessary additional changes presented at the meeting. The finalform rulemaking was published at 52 Pa.B. 7381 (December 3, 2022) and went into effect on January 1, 2023.

F. Paperwork

This proposed rulemaking will not increase paperwork and will not create new paperwork requirements.

G. Fiscal Impact

This proposed rulemaking will have no adverse fiscal impact on the Commonwealth or its political subdivisions.

H. Public Comments

Interested persons are invited to submit written comments, objections or suggestions about this proposed rulemaking 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*. Comments submitted by facsimile will not be accepted. Comments also may be submitted electronically to RA-pfbcregulations@pa.gov. Electronic comments submitted in any other manner will not be accepted.

TIMOTHY D. SCHAEFFER,

Executive Director

Fiscal Note: 48A-347. No fiscal impact; recommends adoption.

Annex A TITLE 58. RECREATION PART II. FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION Subpart C. BOATING CHAPTER 107. BOATING RESTRICTIONS

§ 107.1. Horsepower restrictions.

On waters where horsepower limitations are prescribed, as set forth in Chapter 111 (relating to special regulations counties), [the use of internal combustion motors in excess of the prescribed horsepower limitation is prohibited] horsepower limitations apply to both internal combustion motors and electric motors. Boats with motors larger than the maximum horsepower shall be permitted but the motors may not be used.

§ 107.2. Electric motors.

Except as otherwise specified in Chapter 111 (relating to special regulations counties):

(1) Electric motors are permitted on Commission owned or controlled lakes and on State Park lakes where boating is permitted. On waters where horsepower limitations are prescribed in Chapter 111, electric motors in excess of maximum horsepower limitations or equivalent kilowatt ratings shall not be used.

(1.1) Boats propelled by electric motors on Commission owned or controlled lakes, State Park lakes and water bodies in Chapter 111 shall not be operated at greater than slow, no-wake speed.

(2) On Commission and State Park owned or controlled lakes, internal combustion motors attached to or installed in boats need not be removed, but the operation of engines is specifically prohibited.

(3) Officers authorized to enforce the code and this part and, in the case of State Park lakes, officers and officials of the Bureau of State Parks and operators of emergency vessels may operate boats powered by internal combustion motors in the performance of their official duties on waters otherwise restricted to electric motors only.

[Pa.B. Doc. No. 23-1691. Filed for public inspection December 8, 2023, 9:00 a.m.]