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THE CASE FOR TROUT CREEL LIMITS

1. Only a suitable creel limit will effectively distribute harvest.
2. If creel limits are too high, and size restrictions too liberal, the fishery is basically unmanaged.
3. Pennsylvania, with the nation's highest angler use per acre, also has regulations that are among a handful of the nation's most liberal.
4. Every state has creel limits; some have no size restrictions, or effectively use maximum size limits.
5. If 10% of anglers now catch 90% of the trout, a mere 10% transfer of their harvest would double the catch of 90% of our anglers.
6. High creel limits are equated by many of the nation's top fishery managers as (now discredited) harvest orientation.
7. Creel limits must be low enough to limit catches. Those managers who insist that lowering creel limits will have no biological benefit, are admitting that existing limits are far too high.
8. Pennsylvania's total trout harvest-hatchery, COOP & wild--is now about 6.5 million, or fewer that six per angler year--if calculated by cost or by numbers available. High creel limits infer that it is acceptable to kill more that this per outing.
9. A few anglers capable of easily catching high limits can destroy a small stream population in one season. It's not the average angler's catch we need control, but that of the top 5% to 10%.
10. A huge majority of the nation's finest fishery managers have stated that most state standard creel limits are still too high. →

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11. Size regulations must be carefully crafted to prevent harm. Our former 6 inch minimum arguably genetically altered brook trout by protecting slow growers. The same thing could happen if we split later maturing brown trout year classes.
12. Our fisheries managers often quote Bob Hunt, a retired Wisconsin trout manager: "A size limit applies to every trout" (1974). However, Wisconsin's creel limits vary from zero to 5 for brown and rainbows combined. According to AFS statistics, Pennsylvania's trout resources are subject to eleven times Wisconsin's angler use per acre, so their highest creel limit is equivalent to one half fish per angler in Pennsylvania. In personal conversation, I've learned that Hunt agrees that our creel limit is too high.
13. Many things, but primarily the production to biomass ratio (P/B), determines effectiveness of size limits.
14. Maryland terminated stocking all streams with natural reproduction and dropped creel limits on those streams from 5 to 2. They have no minimum size. Populations of these streams have exploded. Why not here?
15. I am not aware of any state or province whose blue ribbon trout streams are not far better protected than Pennsylvania's Class A streams.

In my opinion, lower creel limits, combined with appropriate size regulations, will best enhance the population structure of most of our now essentially unregulated streams.

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ADDENDA:

16. Lower creel limits have been observed to increase anglers' perception of acceptable minimum size for harvest.
17. Minimum size has limited usefulness in an adult trout hatchery program unless larger than the hatchery size range.