

**Regulation 4VAC15-330.
Fish: Trout Fishing.**

**Section 4VAC15-330-210. Special provisions applicable
to youth-only stocked trout waters.**
(new section)

SUMMARY:

The proposal is to develop youth-only stocked trout waters where only youth 15 years of age and younger can fish specific waters from April 1 through June 15.

PROPOSED LANGUAGE OF REGULATION:

4 VAC 15-330-210. Fish: Trout Fishing. Special provisions applicable to youth-only stocked trout waters.

Waters selected by the director for inclusion into the Youth-only Stocked Trout Program will be considered Youth-only Stocked Trout Waters from April 1 through June 15. Only youth 15 years of age and younger may participate in the program. The daily trout creel limit shall be three. From June 16 through March 31, statewide fishing regulations and licensing requirements apply. Adults (17 years of age and older) are not required to have a freshwater fishing license or a trout license to assist youth fishing in Youth-only Stocked Trout Waters. Adults assisting youth (15 years of age and younger) while fishing in Youth-only Stocked Trout Waters can:

1. Bait the hook;
2. Assist in casting; and
3. Assist with removing the fish from the hook/line.

Adults cannot assist with catching a fish (setting the hook and/or retrieving the fish).

RATIONALE:

Recruitment of new trout anglers is a top priority for the Department. The average age of anglers that fish for stocked trout in Virginia is approaching fifty. Trout license sales are also on the decline. The future of fishing in Virginia, and the Department's stocked trout program, is dependent on recruiting youth to the sport. The Department has supported kids-only fishing days across the Commonwealth for many years. In 2015, the VDGIF provided trout for 29 different kids fishing events. While these events are very popular, they last for no more than one day. Department staffs do not know how many of the children participating in these events become licensed anglers or stocked trout anglers in the future. Recent public input also demonstrated an on-going need for special resources available to youth only where they do not have to "compete" with adult anglers.