

4VAC15-320-60. Approval required to stock fish into inland waters

SUMMARY: The recommendation is to add rock bass and flathead catfish to the list of fish that cannot be stocked into private lakes and ponds.

1 **4VAC15-320-60. Approval required to stock fish into inland waters.**

2 A. It shall be unlawful to stock any species of fish into any inland waters of the Commonwealth
3 without first obtaining written approval to do so from the department. Nothing in this section
4 shall be construed as restricting the use of native and naturalized species of fish in privately-
5 owned ponds and lakes, except spotted bass, rock bass, flathead catfish, blue catfish, and their
6 hybrids may not be stocked.

7 B. The Department of Wildlife Resources (department) shall issue a written stocking
8 authorization within 15 business days of receipt of a completed Virginia Fish Stocking
9 Authorization Form, unless the department determines that granting such authorization may (i)
10 endanger any native or naturalized population of fish; (ii) introduce, enable, or enhance the
11 spread of fish diseases, including parasites; or (iii) establish nonnative or exotic aquatic species
12 where such species may displace, threaten, or endanger native or naturalized species. Where an
13 exception to issuance exists, the application shall be denied.

14 C. The department shall set an expiration date for each stocking authorization issued, limit the
15 authorization to a specific species of fish, and geographically limit the stocking authorization.

16 D. The department is authorized to modify or revoke any stocking authorization where the
17 department discovers any situation listed in subsection B of this section to exist or where
18 otherwise permitted by law or regulation.

19 **Statutory Authority**

20 §§ [29.1-501](#) and [29.1-502](#) of the Code of Virginia.

RATIONALE: Both rock bass and flathead catfish are invasive species. Rock bass hybridize with Roanoke bass, a Species of Greatest Conservation Need that supports a small but important recreational fishery. Flathead catfish are highly invasive predators that are introduced illegally to create sport fishing opportunities. Adding both of these species to the “no stocking” provision will help curb the potential spread by making it unlawful to stock into private waterbodies. Existing regulation prohibits the stocking of any fish into a river, stream or public lake without a stocking authorization from the Department.