

## MDC proposes raising trout permits

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) is proposing increases to the prices of its annual trout permits and daily trout tags starting in 2020. According to MDC, the increases are needed to better cover its costs of running five trout hatcheries that raise and release more than 1.7 million trout each year for public fishing.

If the price increases are implemented, starting in 2020 the cost of an annual trout permit will go from \$7 to \$10 for anglers 16 years of age and older and from \$3.50 to \$5 for anglers ages 15 and younger. The cost of a daily trout tag to fish at Missouri's four trout parks -- Maramec Spring Park, Bennett Spring State Park, Montauk State Park, and Roaring River State Park -- will go from \$3 to \$4 for adults and from \$2 to \$3 for those 15 years of age and younger.

A trout permit is required to possess trout, except in trout parks where a daily trout fishing tag is required during the catch-and-keep season. In addition, a trout permit is required for winter fishing in trout parks during the catch-and-release season and for fishing year-round in Lake Taneycomo upstream from the U.S. Highway 65 bridge. To fish for trout, you must also have a fishing permit or qualify for an exemption.

"The Conservation Department has not increased these permit prices in nearly two decades," said MDC Director Sara Parker Pauley. "We are adjusting these permit prices -- which were set in 1999 -- to make them more in line with today's real costs of the work we do. The price increases will help MDC meet the pressures of increased management costs at our hatcheries and help meet the increased demand for trout fishing around the state."

MDC raises trout at five fish hatcheries and releases about 1.7 million trout around the state for public fishing each year. MDC stocks the trout at the four very popular daily trout parks, in more than 150 miles of cold-water trout streams, at Lake Taneycomo, and at numerous lakes around the state as part of its winter trout-fishing program. The winter trout-fishing program started in 1989 in St. Louis and has been expanded to 35 lakes in communities across the state.

According to MDC, the annual cost of fish food and staff labor to raise a trout in 2003 was about \$1 per fish. The annual cost in 2017 had jumped to nearly twice that amount.

Those five fish hatcheries -- Bennett Spring, Montauk, Shepherd of the Hills, Roaring River, and Maramec Spring Park -- also require regular maintenance, and several have been damaged numerous times in recent years by spring flooding. MDC has spent more than \$11 million over the past decade on repairs and improvements to the hatcheries. MDC also reports that utility costs for the five hatcheries have increased by more than 25% since 2008.

According to MDC, the average Missourian pays about \$19 annually for conservation efforts through the Department's dedicated sales tax revenue. MDC receives no funds from property taxes, tickets or citations (which go to local school districts), or the state's general revenue budget. For more information on MDC revenue, expenses, and key conservation efforts, read the MDC Annual Review in the January 2019 issue of the *Missouri Conservationist*, or online at [mdc.mo.gov/conmag](http://mdc.mo.gov/conmag).

The proposed price increases for annual trout permits and daily trout tags were given initial approval by the Missouri Conservation Commission at its May 23 meeting.

**As part of the rulemaking process, MDC is asking for public comments on the changes during July and early August at [short.mdc.mo.gov/Z49](http://short.mdc.mo.gov/Z49). To comment on proposed price increases for trout permits, refer to “3 CSR 10-5.430 Trout Permit.” For daily trout tags, refer to “3 CSR 10-5.250 Daily Hunting or Fishing Tags.”**

The Commission will consider input received and make a final decision to move forward, modify, or withdraw the changes during its Aug. 23 meeting. If approved, the anticipated effective date of the changes would be Feb. 29, 2020.