

House Bill 1211 (AS PASSED HOUSE AND SENATE)

By: Representatives Reese of the 98th, Lane of the 158th, Ralston of the 7th, Holt of the 112th, Crawford of the 127th, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

To amend Article 3 of Chapter 3 of Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to state symbols, so as to designate the Southern Appalachian brook trout as the official state cold water game fish; to designate the red drum as the official state salt-water fish; to provide for legislative findings; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

SECTION 1.

(a) The General Assembly finds and determines that:

(1) The Southern Appalachian brook trout is one of nature's most exquisite forms of art with its brilliant colors and intricate patterns;

(2) The Southern Appalachian brook trout makes its home in the clean, cold, crystal clear waters of the North Georgia mountains and is Georgia's only native Salmonid species;

(3) Throughout our state's history, our citizens have prized the Southern Appalachian brook trout for its tasty flesh and plentiful numbers;

(4) Over the past century, however, extensive logging has decimated brook trout waters through sedimentation and erosion of habitat and, when nonnative trout were stocked to replace lost populations, the brook trout could not compete and were driven to higher elevation streams where they remain today;

(5) The brook trout is also subject to harm today from acid rain that is deposited in the high mountains and ridges of our state from air pollution;

(6) The protection of the Southern Appalachian brook trout has become a major conservation concern and the inclusion of the Southern Appalachian brook trout in our official state symbols list could possibly contribute to the efforts to protect this magnificent state natural resource;

1 (7) The Southern Appalachian brook trout is an excellent indicator of water and air
2 quality and declines in their numbers can serve as early warning signs that environmental
3 conditions may be deteriorating in our watersheds; and

4 (8) Establishing an official state cold water game fish is necessary to fully recognize our
5 diverse wildlife and the Southern Appalachian brook trout is deserving of the attention
6 and appreciation of the citizens of this state by designation as the official state cold water
7 fish.

8 (b) The General Assembly further finds and declares as follows:

9 (1) The red drum, also known as redfish, spottail bass, and channel bass, is highly prized
10 by Georgia's citizens as a worthy adversary on the end of a fishing line and an epicurean
11 delight on the table;

12 (2) A visually stunning specimen of marine life, the red drum varies in color from a pale
13 pink to a deep bronze. The false-eye spot found near the tail is a unique characteristic as
14 is the powder blue markings on the fringe of the tail;

15 (3) The red drum is found from the smallest tidal creek to the crashing surf on lonely
16 barrier islands to the depths of the Atlantic Ocean and thus is symbolic of the link
17 between the diversity of habitats found along Georgia's coast;

18 (4) A long-lived species, red drum are known to reach an age in excess of 50 years. A
19 single female may produce billions of eggs over a lifetime;

20 (5) Prior to the mid-1980's, Georgia's red drum population was in jeopardy from the
21 over harvesting of immature fish and adults;

22 (6) State biologists and concerned anglers saw the need for conservation of this
23 magnificent species and advocated for the first harvest regulations implemented by the
24 General Assembly in 1986;

25 (7) Year in and year out, red drum rank among the top three species caught and kept by
26 Georgia salt-water anglers. Georgia's human population continues to increase and the
27 number of salt-water anglers seeking red drum increase along with it;

28 (8) Because of the red drum's importance to Georgia anglers, the landmark Peach State
29 Reds Initiative will investigate the feasibility of using hatchery reared red drum as a
30 fishery management tool while providing additional much needed science based
31 information;

32 (9) A survey of the Coastal Conservation Association of Georgia's membership revealed
33 that nearly 50 percent were in favor of the red drum becoming Georgia's state salt-water
34 fish; and

35 (10) Establishing an official state salt-water fish is necessary to fully recognize the
36 importance of our coastal fisheries to our state, and the red drum is deserving of the

1 attention and appreciation of the citizens of this state by designation as the official state
2 salt-water fish.

3 **SECTION 2.**

4 Article 3 of Chapter 3 of Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to state
5 symbols, is amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

6 "50-3-82.

7 The Southern Appalachian brook trout is designated as the official Georgia cold water
8 game fish."

9 **SECTION 3.**

10 Said article is further amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

11 "50-3-83.

12 The red drum is designated as the official Georgia salt-water fish."

13 **SECTION 4.**

14 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.