

Basic recreational saltwater fishing regulations

This brief summary of regulations governs the taking of saltwater species in Florida state waters for personal use. It is not applicable to the commercial harvesting of these species. The absence of complete laws, rules and regulations in this summary does not relieve persons from compliance with those laws, rules or regulations. **State waters extend to 3 nautical miles on the Atlantic and 9 nautical miles on the Gulf. Federal rules apply beyond state waters unless expressly stated otherwise. For species that do not have an established bag limit, more than 100 pounds or two fish per harvester per day (whichever is greater), is considered commercial quantities.** A saltwater products license and commercial vessel registration are required to harvest commercial quantities of unregulated species. It is illegal to sell recreationally harvested fish without compliance with commercial license requirements. Issue Forty, Jan. 2012. **Highlights indicate recent regulation changes.**

| Species | Minimum Size Limits | Closed Season | Daily Rec. Bag Limit | Remarks |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| Amberjack, Greater ▲ ● | 28" fork Atlantic; 30" fork Gulf | June 1 – July 31 Gulf of Mexico | 1 per harvester per day | |
| Amberjack, Lesser & Banded Rudderfish ▲ ● | Not less than 14" or more than 22" fork | | 5 aggregate of lesser amberjack and banded rudderfish | |
| Billfish ▲ | Sailfish 63"; Blue Marlin 99"; White Marlin 66" | | 1 per harvester per day aggregate bag limit | Measured tip of lower jaw to fork. All landed fish must be reported to NOAA within 24 hours 800-894-5528 or hmspermits.noaa.gov. HMS permit required in federal waters. |
| Black Drum ▲ □ T ■ | Not less than 14" or more than 24" | | 5 per harvester per day | May possess one over 24". Snatching prohibited. |
| Bluefish ▲ | 12" fork | | 10 per harvester per day | |
| Bonefish ■ | | | 0 per harvester per day | Catch and release only. Hook and line gear only. |
| Clams (Hard) | 1" thick across hinge | May not harvest half hour after official sunset until half hour before official sunrise | One 5 gal. bucket per harvester or 2 per vessel, whichever is less per day (whole in shell) | Illegal to harvest from closed areas. Go to www.floridaaquaculture.com for allowable harvesting areas. |
| Cobia (Ling) ▲ | 33" fork | | 1 per harvester or 6 per vessel per day, whichever is less | To sell or exceed the daily bag limit follow commercial regulations. |
| Crab, Blue | | Sept. 20 – Oct. 4 Gulf state waters beyond 3 miles closed to traps; federal waters closed to traps; Regional closures (see map on page 24) | 10 gallons whole per harvester per day | 5 traps maximum. Trap requirements apply. Harvest of egg-bearing crabs prohibited. See page 24 for more information. |
| Crab, Blue Land | | July 1 – Oct. 31 | 20 per harvester per day | Trapping prohibited, harvest of egg-bearing females prohibited, harvest prohibited in state parks and from the right-of-way of federal, state or county maintained roads. |
| Crab, Stone ■ | 2 ¾" claw | May 16 – Oct. 14 | 1 gal. Stone Crab claws per harvester or 2 gal. per vessel, whichever is less | 5 traps maximum. Trap requirements apply. Illegal to possess whole crab. Harvest of egg-bearing crabs prohibited. |
| Crawfish (Spiny Lobster) ▲ | Carapace must be greater than 3" measured in the water | April 1 – Aug. 5 Exception: Sport Season (last consecutive Wed & Thurs of July each year) | Regular season: 6 per harvester per day | Recreational trapping prohibited. Spiny Lobster permit required when license required. Harvest of egg-bearing females prohibited. Special bag limit for 2-day Sport Season. Contact FWC regional office for current information on Sport Season. |
| Dolphin ▲ | 20" fork Atlantic | | 10 per harvester per day, not to exceed 60 per vessel per day | To sell or exceed the daily bag limit follow commercial regulations. |
| Flounder ▲ □ T | 12" | | 10 per harvester per day | May be harvested by spearing. Snatching prohibited. |
| Gag ▲ □ ● | 24" Atlantic & Monroe County 22" Gulf (excluding Monroe County) | Jan. 1 – March 31 Gulf (excluding Monroe County) Closed Atlantic & Monroe County Jan. 1 – April 30 | 1 per harvester per day Atlantic & Monroe County; 2 per harvester per day Gulf (excluding Monroe County) | No more than 1 fish may be Gag or Black Grouper, either individually or in combination in Atlantic & Monroe County. Included within the 3 per harvester per day (Atlantic & Monroe County) and 4 per harvester per day (Gulf excluding Monroe County) Grouper aggregate bag limit. Zero daily bag and possession limit for captain & crew on for-hire vessels. Gag grouper regulations are currently in the process of being changed. Please check back with MyFWC.com for the latest updates. |
| Grouper, Black ▲ □ ● | 24" Atlantic & Monroe County 22" Gulf (excluding Monroe County) | Closed in Gulf (excluding Monroe County) Feb. 1 – March 31 Closed Atlantic & Monroe County Jan. 1 – April 30 | 1 per harvester per day Atlantic & Monroe County; 4 per harvester per day Gulf (excluding Monroe County) | |
| Grouper, Red ▲ □ ● | 20" | Closed Atlantic & Monroe County Jan. 1 – April 30 | 3 per harvester per day Atlantic & Monroe County; 4 per harvester per day Gulf (excluding Monroe County) | Included within the 3 per harvester per day (Atlantic & Monroe County) and 4 per harvester per day (Gulf excluding Monroe County) Grouper aggregate bag limit. Zero daily bag and possession limit for captain & crew on for-hire vessels. |
| Grouper, Snowy ▲ ● | | | 1 per harvester per day Atlantic | |
| Grouper, Yellowfin & Yellowmouth ▲ □ ● | 20" | Closed in Gulf (excluding Monroe County) Feb. 1 – March 31 | | |
| Grouper, Scamp ▲ □ ● | 20" Atlantic & Monroe County; 16" Gulf (excluding Monroe County) | Closed Atlantic & Monroe County Jan. 1 – April 30 | | |
| Grouper, Warsaw & Speckled Hind ▲ ● | | | 1 per vessel per day of each species | Included within the 3 per harvester per day (Atlantic & Monroe County) and 4 per harvester per day (Gulf excluding Monroe County) Grouper aggregate bag limit. |
| Grouper, all others ▲ ● | | Closed in Gulf (excluding Monroe County) Feb. 1 – March 31 for Rock Hind and Red Hind Closed Atlantic & Monroe County Jan. 1 – April 30 for Tiger, Rock Hind, Red Hind, Coney, Graysby | | Atlantic & Monroe County: Zero daily bag and possession limit for captain and crew on for-hire vessels |
| Hogfish ▲ ● | 12" fork | | 5 per harvester per day | |
| Mackerel, King ▲ | 24" fork | | 2 per harvester per day | |
| Mackerel, Spanish ▲ | 12" fork | | 15 per harvester per day | Transfer of Spanish Mackerel to other vessels at sea is prohibited. |
| Mullet, Striped (Black) & Silver | | | 50 aggregate per harvester per day; Aggregate vessel limits Feb. 1 – Aug. 31: 100 per vessel; Sept. 1 – Jan. 31: 50 per vessel | Mullet aggregate bag limit includes Striped and Silver. Call DMFM for additional restrictions in Pinellas and Charlotte counties. |
| Oysters | 3" | June, July, Aug. in Dixie, Wakulla, Levy counties. July, Aug., Sept. in all other areas. | 2 bags per harvester or vessel, whichever is less per day. 1 Bag = 60 lbs. or two 5 gal. buckets (whole in shell) | Apalachicola Bay has summer & winter seasons/areas. Harvest from approved shellfish areas only. Go to www.floridaaquaculture.com for allowable harvesting areas. |
| Permit ▲ T ■ | 22" fork SPZ; Not less than 11" or more than 22" fork all other areas | May 1 – July 31 SPZ | 1 per harvester per day, not to exceed 2 per vessel per day SPZ; 2 per harvester per day all other state waters | May possess 1 over 22" fork length in all other areas, not to exceed 2 over 22" fork per vessel per day. See page 11 for gear restrictions. |
| Pompano, Florida ▲ T ■ | 11" fork | | 6 per harvester per day | Hook and line, cast net, and beach or haul seine ONLY. |

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|--------------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| Pompano, African ▲ T ■ | 24" fork | | 2 per harvester per day, not to exceed 2 per vessel per day. | |
| Red Drum (Redfish) ▲ □ T | Not less than 18" or more than 27" | | 2 per harvester per day N.E./N.W. Region 1 per harvester per day South Region | Gigging, spearing, snatching prohibited. Harvest in Federal waters prohibited. See Red Drum article page 18. New regulations effective February 1, 2012. |
| Red Porgy ▲ □ ● | 14" Atlantic | | 3 per harvester per day Atlantic | |
| Scallops, Bay | | Sept. 11 – June 30 | 2 gallons whole or 1 pint meat per harvester per day; no more than 10 gallons whole, or ½ gallon meat per vessel anytime | Harvest allowed only in state waters of the Gulf of Mexico from the Pasco-Hernando county line, to the west bank of the Mexico Beach Canal in Bay County. |
| Sea Bass, Black ▲ □ ● | 12" Atlantic; 10" Gulf | | 15 per harvester per day Atlantic | |
| Shad | | | 10 aggregate per harvester per day | American, Alabama & Hickory are part of aggregate limit. Hook & line gear only. |
| Shark ▲ T | 54" fork for all sharks except Atlantic sharpnose, blacknose, blacktip, bonnethead, finetooth and smooth dogfish | | 1 per harvester or 2 per vessel per day, whichever is less | Hook and line gear only. See list below for prohibited species. |
| Sheepshead ▲ □ T | 12" | | 15 per harvester per day | Snatching prohibited. |
| Shrimp ▲ | | April & May closed to Nassau, Duval, St. Johns, Putnam, Flagler & Clay counties | 5 gallons heads on per harvester or vessel per day, whichever is less | Contact FWC Regional Office for closed areas. |
| Snapper, Black & Wenchman ▲ ● | | | Included within 10 per harvester per day Snapper aggregate bag limit | |
| Snapper, Cubera ▲ □ ● | 12" (see remarks) | | Included within 10 per harvester per day Snapper aggregate bag limit if under 30" | May possess no more than 2 Cubera Snapper over 30" per harvester or vessel per day, whichever is less. 30" or larger not included within the Snapper aggregate bag limit. |
| Snapper, Gray (Mangrove) ▲ □ ● | 10" | | 5 per harvester per day | Included within 10 per harvester per day Snapper aggregate bag limit. |
| Snapper, Lane ▲ □ ● | 8" | | Included within 10 per harvester per day Snapper aggregate bag limit Atlantic | Gulf not included within the Snapper aggregate bag limit. |
| Snapper, Mutton ▲ □ ● | 16" | | Included within 10 per harvester per day Snapper aggregate bag limit | |
| Snapper, Red ▲ □ ● | 20" Atlantic; 16" Gulf | July 19 – May 31 Gulf | 2 per harvester per day | Included within 10 per harvester per day Snapper aggregate bag limit. Note: Check www.MyFWC.com/Fishing for most current regulations prior to fishing. Gulf: Zero daily bag and possession limit for captain and crew on for-hire vessels. |
| Snapper, Schoolmaster ▲ □ ● | 10" | | Included within 10 per harvester per day Snapper aggregate bag limit | |
| Snapper, Vermilion ▲ □ ● | 12" Atlantic; 10" Gulf | Nov. 1 – March 31 Atlantic | 5 per harvester per day Atlantic; 10 per harvester per day Gulf | Vermilion Snapper not included within the Snapper aggregate bag limit. Atlantic: Zero daily bag and possession limit for captain and crew on for-hire vessels. |
| Snapper, all other ▲ □ ● | 12" | | Included within 10 per harvester per day Snapper aggregate bag limit | Includes: Blackfin, Dog, Mahogany, Queen, Silk & Yellowtail. |
| Snook (all species) ▲ □ T ■ | Not less than 28" or more than 32" Atlantic Not less than 28" or more than 33" Gulf of Mexico, Monroe County, Everglades Nat. Park | Dec. 15 – Jan. 31; June 1 – Aug. 31 Atlantic Closed through Aug. 31, 2012 Gulf of Mexico, Monroe County, Everglades National Park | 1 per harvester per day | Snook permit required for harvest when saltwater license required. Illegal to buy or sell snook. Snatch hooks and spearing prohibited. |
| Sponge, Commercial ■ | Greater than 5" in greatest dimension measured across the top of the sponge | | 10 per harvester per day | Includes: Sheepswool, Yellow, Grass, Glove, Finger, Wire, Reef & Velvet sponge. |
| Spotted Seatrout ▲ □ T ■ | Not less than 15" or more than 20" (statewide) except one fish over 20" per person | | 5 per harvester per day N.W. Region 4 per harvester per day S.W. Region 4 per harvester per day S.E. Region 6 per harvester per day N.E. Region | May possess no more than 1 over 20"; included in the regional bag limit. See regional definitions map on page 8. New regulations effective February 1, 2012. |
| Swordfish | 47" lower jaw fork length with head attached or 29" cleithrum to keel length if head removed. | | 1 per harvester per day, not to exceed a maximum of 4 per recreational (not for-hire) vessel or 15 per for-hire vessel per day | All landed fish must be reported to NOAA within 24 hours 800-894-5528. HMS permit required in federal waters. Zero daily bag and possession limit for captain and crew of for-hire vessels. |
| Tarpon | | | 2 fish possession limit | Requires \$50 tarpon tag to possess or harvest. Snatching and spearing prohibited. Boca Grande Pass has seasonal regulations. Contact DMFM for current information. |
| Tilefish, Golden ▲ ● | | | 1 per harvester per day Atlantic | Included within the 3 per harvester per day (Atlantic & Monroe County) and 4 per harvester per day (Gulf excluding Monroe County) Grouper aggregate bag limit. Atlantic: Zero daily bag and possession limit for captain and crew on for-hire vessels |
| Triggerfish (Gray) ▲ ● | 12" fork Atlantic; 14" fork Gulf | | | Triggerfish except Gray and Ocean have live landing & live well requirements. |
| Tripletail ▲ □ T | 15" | | 2 per harvester per day | Hook & line gear only. No snatch hooks. |
| Wahoo ▲ | | | 2 per harvester per day | To sell or exceed the daily bag limit, follow commercial regulations. |
| Weakfish ▲ □ | 12" | | 1 per harvester per day | Regulations apply in parts of Nassau County only. See MyFWC.com for map. |

- ▲ Must remain in whole condition until landed ashore (heads, fins & tails intact).
- Measured as total length. Total length is the straight line distance from the most forward part of the head with the mouth closed to the farthest tip of the tail with the tail compressed or squeezed together while the fish is lying on its side.
- State regulations apply in federal waters.
- Additional gear rules apply. See Reef Fish Gear Rules page 11.
- T Harvest prohibited by or with the use of any multiple hook in conjunction with live or dead natural bait.

PROHIBITED SPECIES

It is unlawful to harvest, possess, land, purchase, sell, or exchange the following species: Goliath Grouper (Jewfish), Nassau Grouper, Sawfish, Atlantic Angel Shark, Basking Shark, Bigeye Sand Tiger Shark, Bigeye Sixgill Shark, Bigeye Thresher Shark, Bignose Shark, Caribbean Reef Shark, Caribbean Sharpnose Shark, Dusky Shark, Galapagos Shark, Lemon Shark, Longfin Mako Shark, Narrowtooth Shark, Night Shark, Silky Shark, Sand Tiger Shark, Sandbar Shark, Sevengill Shark, Sixgill Shark, Smalltail Shark, Spiny Dogfish, Whale Shark, White Shark, **Tiger Shark**, **Great Hammerhead Shark**, **Scalloped and Smooth Hammerhead Shark**, Spotted Eagle Ray, Longbill Spearfish, Mediterranean Spearfish, Roundscale Spearfish, Sturgeon, Florida Queen Conch, Stony, Hard and Fire Corals, Sea Fans, Bahama Starfish, and Longspine Urchin. Harvest of live rock in state waters is prohibited. Puffer fish harvest is prohibited in Volusia, Brevard, Indian River, St. Lucie and Martin counties.

Harvester: Regardless of what species you are fishing for, bag limits are only for properly licensed individuals and those people exempt from licensing requirements who are actively harvesting. People harvesting may not exceed the individual bag limit and take someone else's bag limit. That is, people (including children) who are not actively harvesting or are not properly licensed (if license is required) may NOT be counted for the purpose of bag limits.

FWC REGIONAL OFFICES

Northwest Region Panama City 850-265-3676; North Central Region Lake City 386-758-0525; Northeast Region Ocala 352-732-1225; Southwest Region Lakeland 863-648-3200; South Region West Palm Beach 561-625-5122; Wildlife Alert 888-404-FWCC (3922)



For saltwater fish identification, request a copy of FWC's Fishing Lines magazine or visit: MyFWC.com.

