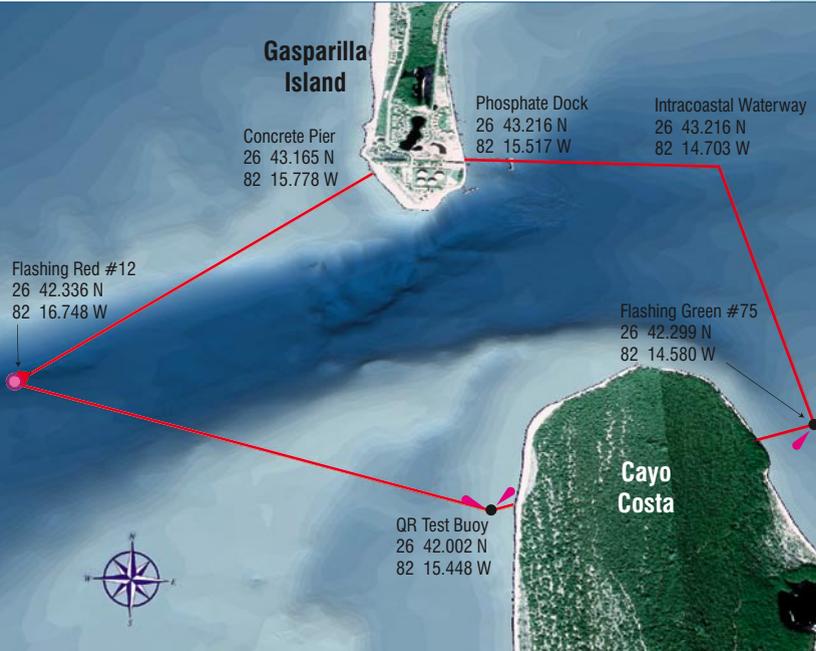


Tarpon Regulations:

Please help conserve this species by practicing catch and release and following all saltwater fishing regulations.



Boca Grande Pass GIS image.

New Regulations - Boca Grande Pass Seasonal Regulations

Beginning April 2005, the following regulations apply each year during the months of April, May, and June:

- A maximum of three fishing lines may be deployed from a vessel at any one time while fishing for all species.
- No person shall use, fish with, or place in the water any breakaway gear.*

*Breakaway gear means any bob, float, weight, lure, or spoon that is affixed to a fishing line or hook with wire, line, rubber bands, plastic ties, or other fasteners designed to break off when a fish is caught.

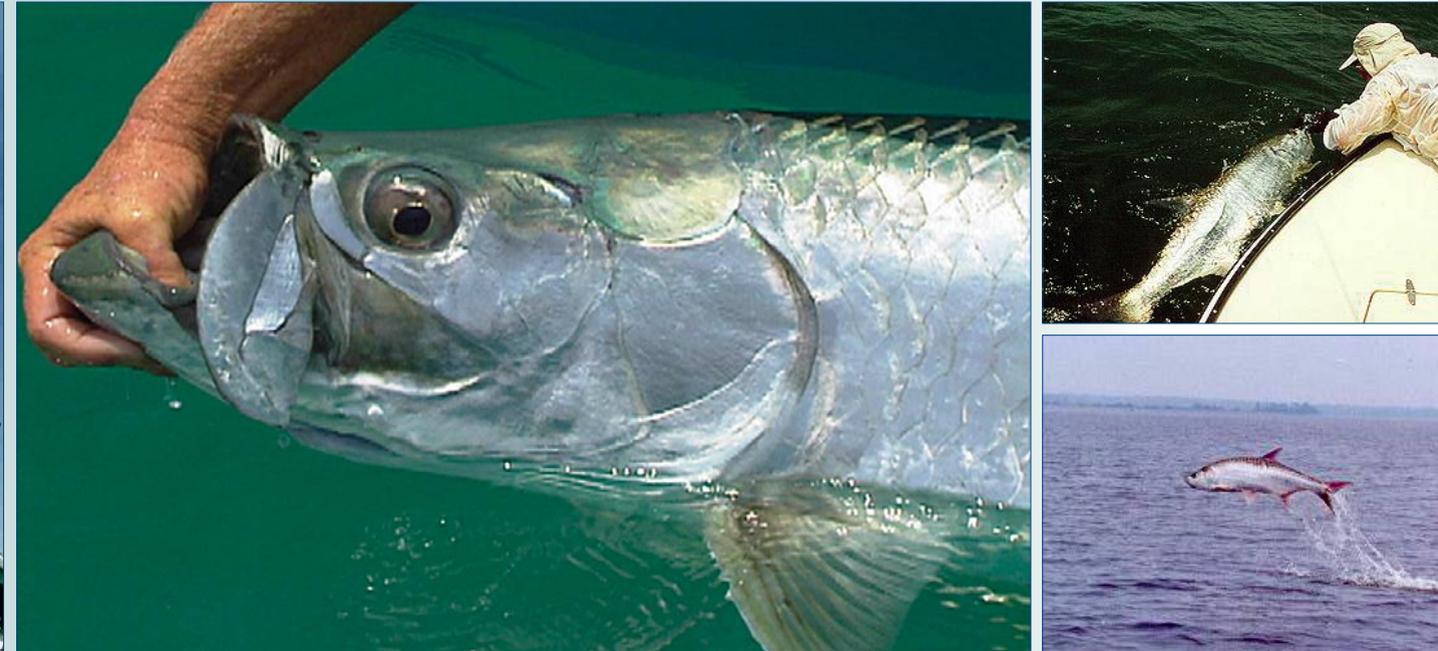
Statewide Regulations

- There is a two fish possession limit for tarpon. You must purchase a tarpon tag from the FWC to lawfully possess a tarpon.
- Tarpon tags can be purchased from your local county tax collector.
- Dragging tarpon to weigh stations is considered possession.
- The intentional snagging or snatch-hooking of tarpon is prohibited.

For questions concerning tarpon regulations contact the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Division of Marine Fisheries Management at **850-488-6058** or on the Web at **MyFWC.com**.

Tarpon Conservation:

Every angler has the responsibility to fish legally and to strive for the survival of fish that are released. With this in mind, the following techniques help increase survival of this spectacular gamefish.



Controlled studies have shown that survival of properly released marine fishes after hook and line capture is high, validating catch and release as a marine conservation tool.

- Playing a fish to exhaustion may kill the fish directly or put the fish at risk of predation, even when released correctly. Therefore, it is important to match your tackle to your target species. For tarpon, use medium/heavy to heavy tackle, tighten your drag, and minimize fight time.
- Never gaff a fish unless you are going to harvest the fish. "Gaff and release" is a practice that may leave the fish with an open wound making them vulnerable to predation.
- Leave fish in the water while photographing, removing the hook, or cutting the leader. Boating large fish is dangerous to you and your crew, and can injure the fish. Don't boat your fish, if you can help it.
- Release fish quickly with the least amount of handling. Always handle fish with wet hands and avoid using dry towels and gloves. Avoid removing slime and scales as they not only fight infection, but they also aid in processes like movement and reproduction.
- Use hooks that corrode quickly if left in the fish when released.
- Reaching through a tarpon's gill slits to control or hold the fish will damage the gills. Gills are delicate respiratory organs that allow fish to obtain oxygen necessary for survival. Instead, use a release tool like a dehooker or a pair of long-nose pliers to free the fish.
- If you cannot see or remove the hook, cut the leader as close to the hook as possible. Pulling or tearing a hook that is lodged inside a fish's mouth can cause more damage to the fish than leaving the hook in the fish.
- Help your fish recover when it is tired. Large fish can be revived after the fight by towing them slowly forward with the boat. Fish can be resuscitated by gently allowing water to flow through the mouth and over the gills before release.
- Use circle hooks when fishing. For some species, circle hooks set in the jaw of the fish greater than 90% of the time, which increases survival of released fish by reducing the amount of damage caused during hook removal.

Tarpon Fishing in Boca Grande Pass



MyFWC.com

Tarpon Fishing in Boca Grande Pass



Introduction:

Boca Grande Pass is a world famous fishing location for tarpon, one of Florida's premier sport fish. The future of the Pass and its tarpon fishery depends on conservation and ethical angling. This brochure will provide anglers with information about tarpon biology, boating etiquette, and current tarpon fishing regulations specific to Boca Grande Pass. Practicing these techniques will promote an enjoyable fishing experience for present and future anglers. Please do your part to adhere to fishing and boating regulations. Help make Boca Grande Pass an enjoyable experience for all who fish there!

Tarpon Biology:

Tarpon, scientifically known as *Megalops atlanticus*, have become the premier inshore sport fish in Florida. Boca Grande Pass has become a world famous fishing spot for the mighty Silver King. FWC scientists found that this species can live for 55 years and matures at age ten when they are approximately four feet long. Tarpon feed in the highly productive waters of Charlotte Harbor immediately before making their journey offshore to spawn. Their spawning season is from April to June. Typical prespawning behavior can be observed as large groups of tarpon swim in daisy chain patterns. Once tarpon have spawned, some may return to the Pass or nearby coastal waters again to feed. The majority of tarpon caught in Boca Grande Pass are of reproductive age; therefore, extra care should be taken when handling these fish so they remain healthy to spawn and produce the next generation of tarpon. Practicing good conservation and fishing ethics when tarpon fishing will help ensure a sustainable tarpon population.

Safe Boating and Pass Etiquette:

Here are some tips and tactics that will help make your tarpon fishing experience safe and enjoyable.

- All boat operators should realize that during tarpon season Boca Grande Pass is an extremely congested area.
- Boat operators should maintain a proper lookout at all times.
- Never turn the boat's engine off or leave the wheel unattended.
- Do not anchor in the Pass.
- Operate your boat at a rate of speed that does not create a wake.
- When approaching the fleet make note of the direction of drift, and begin your drift at the head of the pack (up-current side).
- When finishing a drift, move to the head of the fleet by going around, not through the fleet.
- Boat operators should always avoid interfering with another boat's drift.
- Do not rush over or chase a school of tarpon you see rolling at the surface.
- Do not run through a school of tarpon. Go around them and start your fishing in front of the school.
- Never approach other boats that are playing a tarpon in shallow water.
- Once hooked-up, move your tarpon out of the school and move away from other boats as quickly as possible before you finish the fight and release the fish.
- When fishing at night a vessel must display the proper navigation lights. If a vessel is drifting it is considered underway, and must display the proper navigation lights. If a vessel is at anchor it only has to display the all around white light.

Careless And Reckless Operation:

All vessel operators are responsible for operating their vessel in a reasonable and prudent manner with regard for other vessel traffic, posted speed restrictions, the presence of a divers-down flag, and other circumstances, so as to not endanger other people or property. Failure to do so is considered careless operation (a non-criminal infraction). Anyone who operates a vessel with willful disregard for the safety of persons or property may be cited for reckless operation (a first-degree misdemeanor).

Keep Litter Out Of Boca Grande Pass!

Breakaway gear is prohibited within Boca Grande Pass April through June (see regulations).

- Anglers should make every effort to retrieve tackle that becomes snagged on the bottom of the Pass.
- When an angler's line becomes snagged, all other anglers in the boat should reel up their lines.
- Do not attempt to free the lure on the down current side of the snag. Trying to retrieve a lure in this fashion will result in unnecessary lengths of line on the bottom.
- Move your boat up current from the snag and try to "bounce" the lure free.
- If you cannot free your lure, continue up current until the line breaks. This method of lure retrieval will minimize the amount of line and gear on the bottom.

