

October 2020

FWC's Fishing in the Know

Division of Marine Fisheries Management Monthly Newsletter

Non-stainless-steel hooks (steel and bronze) can help increase survival rates of fish. If these hooks cannot be removed from the fish, they should rust and deteriorate sooner than stainless steel and cadmium or nickel-plated hooks.

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STATE SEASON UPDATES

October – November

State waters are from shore to 9 nautical miles in the Gulf and from shore to 3 nautical miles in the Atlantic.

Oct. 15 – [Stone crab opens](#)

Oct. 17, 18, 24, 25 – [Red snapper \(Gulf\) opens](#)

Oct. 26 – [Gray triggerfish \(Gulf\) closes](#)

Oct. 31 and Nov. 1 – [Red snapper \(Gulf\) opens](#)

Nov. 1 – [Hogfish \(Atlantic\) closes](#)

Nov. 1 – [Amberjack \(Gulf\) closes](#)

Nov. 1 – [Spotted seatrout \(Central East management area\) closes](#)

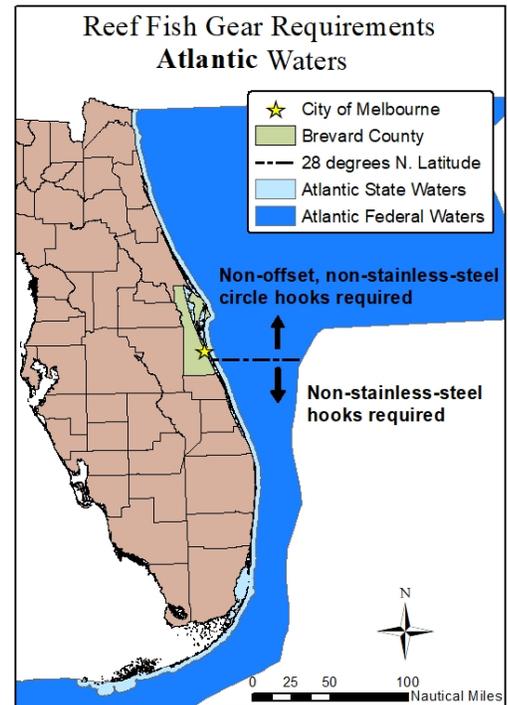
Commission meeting – October

Marine Fisheries items

Information: The FWC Commission will listen to public testimony on and discuss the following marine fisheries management items at the virtual Oct. 7-8 meeting.

Decision making (regulation changes anticipated to be made on these topics):

- **Apalachicola oysters:** The Commission will consider a proposal that will include the temporary suspension of all wild oyster harvest from Apalachicola Bay and the prohibition of on-the-water possession of wild oyster harvesting equipment (tongs) through Dec. 31, 2025.. The proposed rules will not apply to oyster aquaculture operations. These changes were proactively put into place Aug. 1, 2020, via Executive Order. Staff will continue monitoring oyster recovery and will evaluate whether harvest opportunities may be available prior to end of 2025
- **Atlantic reef fish hook requirements:** The Commission will consider a proposal to adopt new hook requirements in Atlantic state waters. The proposed changes include requiring anglers to use non-stainless-steel, non-offset circle hooks north of 28 degrees north latitude (near Melbourne) and non-stainless-steel hooks south of 28 degrees north latitude hook-and-line (see map) when using natural baits to target reef fish like snapper or grouper from a vessel in Atlantic state waters. These changes are consistent with requirements in Atlantic federal waters that recently took effect and are aligned with best fishing practices that help fish survive when caught and released.



- **Blueline tilefish:** The Commission will consider creating new regulations for the recreational harvest of blueline tilefish in Atlantic state waters including establishing a three blueline tilefish recreational bag limit withing the three-fish aggregate for grouper and tilefish and setting a May 1 through Aug. 31 recreational harvest season. These new regulations are consistent with those in Atlantic federal waters and could help prevent both recreational quota overages and overfishing. Changes include creating a new recreational bag limit and harvest season.

Draft proposal (these items will be brought back to a future meeting for final decision):

- **Flounder:** The Commission will consider a draft proposal to make several changes to the flounder fishery. This includes possible changes to the size limit, recreational bag limit, establishing commercial trip and vessel limits, establishing a recreational closed season, and extending all proposed and existing flounder regulations into federal waters.

Discussions (no regulation changes are anticipated on these items):

- **Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and Keys update:** Staff will review and provide a presentation on ongoing fisheries issues relevant to the Florida Keys region including: status of issues raised in FWC comments on the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Restoration Blueprint, Western Dry Rocks, permit, mutton snapper, and casitas. For each topic, staff will provide a brief overview and timelines for next steps.
- **Federal fishery management updates:** The Commission will discuss outcomes of recent meetings of the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico federal fishery management councils.

Links for more information:

[Agenda](#) [MyFWC.com]

Blue crab trap workshops

Share your input

Information: The FWC needs your input on the future management of the blue crab fishery. The FWC is hosting virtual public workshops to discuss the interactions between diamondback terrapins in blue crab traps and the utility of bycatch reduction devices to minimize such interactions. Share your input by attending.

Workshops will begin at 6 p.m. EDT:

Web browsers that support virtual meeting include Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Microsoft Edge, and Internet Explorer

Please click only on the link for the day you plan to attend. The links to the meetings are different depending on which meeting you plan to attend.

- **Sept. 30: Statewide webinar**, [Click here to connect to Sept. 30 meeting](#)
- **Oct. 1: Statewide webinar**, [Click here to connect to Oct. 1 meeting](#)

You can also submit your comments online at [MyFWC.com/SaltwaterComments](https://www.myfwc.com/SaltwaterComments).

[Learn more at](#) [MyFWC.com/Marine](https://www.myfwc.com/Marine) by clicking on “Rulemaking: Submit a Comment/Attend a Workshop” and “Upcoming Public Workshops.”

Gulf red snapper

Fall season scheduled

Information: The Gulf fall red snapper season for private recreational anglers and state for-hire operations in the Gulf of Mexico will be open the following Saturdays and Sundays: Oct. 17, 18, 24, 25, 31 and Nov. 1. During this season, private recreational anglers may harvest red snapper in Gulf state and federal waters. However, state for-hire operations are limited to fishing for red snapper in Gulf state waters only.

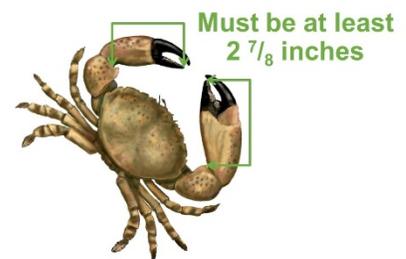
Planning to participate in the fall season? Don't forget to sign State Reef Fish Survey. All anglers fishing from private recreational vessels must sign up as a [State Reef Fish Angler](#) to target red snapper and several other reef fish in state and federal waters, even if they are exempt from fishing license requirements. Sign up as a State Reef Fish Angler at no cost at [GoOutdoorsFlorida.com](#) or by visiting any location you can purchase a license.

Link for more information:
[Snapper Information](#) [MyFWC.com]

Stone crab

New regulations in effect as recreational and commercial season opens Oct. 15

Information: Several recreational and commercial stone crab regulation changes will go into effect shortly before the Oct. 15 season start date.



Regulation changes include:

- The minimum claw size limit will be $2 \frac{7}{8}$ inches
- Possession of whole stone crabs on the water will be limited to two checker boxes, each up to 3 feet by 2 feet by 2 feet **OR** a total volume of 24 cubic feet. Checker boxes are used to hold crabs onboard a vessel before they are measured and legal-sized claws are removed.
- The season will now be open through May 1, closing on May 2.
- All plastic and wood stone crab traps will need to be outfitted with a $2 \frac{3}{16}$ -inch escape ring before the 2023/2024 season.

As a reminder, all recreational harvesters who are age 16 and older and fish with stone crab traps are required to complete an online, no-cost recreational stone crab trap registration and place their registration number on their traps before using them. To register, visit [GoOutdoorsFlorida.com](#), sign in, click the blue "Purchase a License" button, scroll down to the "Saltwater Permits" section, and select "Recreational Stone Crab Trap Registration."

Upon completion, each person will receive unique trap registration numbers that must be included on each trap along with the owner's full name and address. This information must be legible and must be permanently attached to each trap.

Link for more information:
[Stone Crab Information](#) [MyFWC.com]

Gray triggerfish

Season closes in Gulf waters Oct. 26

Information: The last day for the recreational gray triggerfish season in Gulf state and federal waters is Oct. 25, closing Oct. 26.

If you are fishing for gray triggerfish from a private recreational vessel, you are required to sign up as a State Reef Fish Angler (including those 65 and older). Learn more at MyFWC.com/SRFS.

Links for more information:

[Gray triggerfish](http://MyFWC.com) [MyFWC.com]

iAngler app

Report and track your catches

Information: Want a quick way to report your catch information to FWC and keep a record of your catches? Check out the Angler Action Foundation's iAngler app. The data you provide when using this app helps FWC researchers improve stock assessments for important inshore fisheries like snook and red drum.

Links for more information:

[iAngler app](http://AnglerActionFoundation.com) [AnglerActionFoundation.com]

Florida Friendly Fishing Guide

Are you an eco-minded fishing guide or angler?

Information: The Florida Friendly Fishing Guide certification recognizes saltwater and freshwater fishing guides who are committed to preserving the future of Florida's fisheries through sustainable boating and fishing techniques.

Established by the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), Florida Sea Grant, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the program helps guides provide a richer fishing experience for their clients through their angling expertise and environmental stewardship.

This online certification course covers science-based techniques that minimize the environmental footprint and includes subjects such as best practices for catch and release fishing, seafood safety and handling, an introduction to fisheries management and more.

Participating guides can put the Florida Friendly Fishing Guide logo on their websites and vessels, letting customers know that they adhere to the highest environmental standards. They also receive a welcome gear pack valued at more than \$150, listing on the Florida Sea Grant website, and social media promotion.

Learn more about how to sign up and take this online course at <https://www.flseagrant.org/florida-friendly-fishing-guide-certification/>.

For questions including information on scholarships to partially cover the course cost, please email Savanna Barry at Savanna.Barry@UFL.edu.



2020 Lionfish Challenge

Turn in lionfish, win prizes

Information: The 2020 Lionfish Challenge rewards lionfish harvesters with prizes for submitting lionfish. Participants who remove the most lionfish in the recreational and commercial categories by Nov. 1 will be crowned the 2020 Recreational Lionfish King/Queen and the Commercial Champion. Register today or learn more about the program at FWCReefRangers.com.

FLCoralCrew

Information: If you want healthy, beautiful coral reefs and would like more information about Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease and what the FWC and partners are doing to help, join the Crew and sign up today: FLCoralCrew.com.

FWC needs your feedback

Information: FWC is collecting feedback on several fisheries topics including flounder, spot, croaker, and trap fisheries.

Provide comments on these or other fisheries online at MyFWC.com/SaltwaterComments.

Catch a Florida Memory Submit saltwater catches and earn rewards

Information: Prize package mailings have resumed but will continue to be slower than normal over the next few months as we continue to work through delays resulting from COVID-19. Anglers are still encouraged to submit catches and enjoy getting out on the water.



**Saltwater Angler
Recognition**

Earn rewards for various achievements while targeting a diversity of species and reducing fishing pressure on the most commonly sought-after catches.

- [Saltwater Fish Life List](#): Can you catch all 70 species?
- [Saltwater Reel Big Fish](#): Recognition for extraordinary-sized catches.
- [Saltwater Grand Slams](#): Earn rewards for catching three specific fish in 24 hours.

Join the [Triple Threat Club](#) and earn even more prizes (including a long sleeve performance fishing shirt and more) by participating in all three programs. Anglers must qualify for each of the three programs to be eligible.

FWC also manages the [Florida Saltwater Fishing Records](#) program.

Link for more information:

CatchaFloridaMemory.com

EVENTS

October – November

COVID-19 update: Our top priorities are the health and safety of Floridians and visitors. Many of our in-person events have been canceled in response to COVID-19, but future events will be posted here as they are scheduled.

Oct. 1 – [Blue crab trap workshop](#)
Oct. 7-8 – [FWC Commission meeting](#)
Oct. 17 – [Virtual MarineQuest](#)

Contact: 850-487-0554 or marine@myfwc.com

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