



This document is a review and discussion on the concept of creating saltwater game fish and sport fish designations for Florida. Possible components of these definitions are presented, as well as a discussion of some saltwater fish in Florida that could potentially fit into these categories.

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Fishing Capital of World

Florida has this distinction based on a number of factors

- Amount of coastline, rivers, and lakes
- Diversity of fishing opportunities, fisheries, and habitats
 - Fly fish on flats
 - Billfishing
 - Snapper and grouper fishing on reefs
 - Shoreline fishing
 - Diving for spiny lobster and scallops
 - Bass fishing in lakes
- Year-round fishing
- More IGFA records than any other state or country



Florida
**FISHING
CAPITAL**
of the **WORLD**



Florida is known as the “Fishing Capital of the World” because of the diverse fishing opportunities available in the state. For example, saltwater anglers can fly fish in the shallow flats for bonefish and permit, fish inshore for red drum or spotted seatrout, troll for billfish, spend time on natural and artificial reefs fishing for grouper and snapper, shoreline fish, take the family on a trip looking for bay scallops in the grassy flats, and go diving for spiny lobster in South Florida. The diversity of trophy fishes and habitats, great weather, year-round fishing, superb tourism, and fishing industry-related infrastructure are unsurpassed.

Florida has 12,133 square miles of water; 2,276 miles of tidal shoreline; about 12,000 miles of fishable rivers, streams and canals; and about 7,700 lakes. The FWC manages more than 200 native species of freshwater fish and more than 500 native species of saltwater fish.

Florida holds over 14% (979 records) of all current International Game Fish Association (IGFA) world records (6776 records), which is more than any other state or country. The second place country, Australia, holds only half as many records as Florida. Compared to other states, Florida holds more than three times the number of records as next highest state, California (309 records).

Economic Impact of Recreational Fishing

▪ Saltwater:

- 1,286,000 resident
- 716,000 nonresident
- \$5.7 billion impact
- Supports 54,500 jobs



▪ Freshwater:

- 1,155,000 resident
- 262,000 nonresident
- \$2.6 billion impact
- Supports 24,800 jobs

Florida has an estimated 1,286,000 resident and 716,000 nonresident saltwater anglers and 1,155,000 resident and 262,000 nonresident freshwater anglers. Saltwater fishing has an estimated \$5.7 billion impact in the state of Florida and supports 54,500 jobs. Freshwater fishing has a \$2.6 billion impact and supports 24,800 jobs.

Background

- Florida has no official saltwater game fish or sport fish designation
- Florida has a freshwater game fish designation
 - May only be taken by hook and line
 - No sale allowed
 - Commercial harvest of certain freshwater game fish is allowed in specific areas with specific gear



Florida has no official saltwater game fish or sport fish designation. However, Florida does have a freshwater game fish designation. Freshwater game fish are defined in Rule 68A-1, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), as largemouth, shoal, Suwannee, spotted, shadow, peacock white, striped, white-striped hybrid, and sunshine bass; black and white crappie; and bluegill, redear, redbreast, flier, warmouth, longear, mud, and spotted sunfish. The rules for harvesting freshwater game fish are located in rule 68A-23, F.A.C., and include prohibitions on the harvest of game fish with any gear except hook and line and prohibitions on sale or purchase of game fish. However, certain exceptions allow the commercial harvest of game fish with gear other than hook and line in specific bodies of water. One example of this is Lake Okeechobee, where the commercial harvest of game fish (excluding some bass and crappie) is allowed by persons holding a haul seine permit.

Possible Definition of Game fish

- No or limited commercial harvest
- No sale or limited sale
- Hook and line only



Possible Definition of Sport fish

- No commercial harvest
- No sale
- Hook and line only
- ***No recreational harvest – catch and release only***



A variety of options exist for defining Florida game fish and sport fish. Some possible components of the definition of game fish in Florida could be:

- no commercial harvest or limited commercial harvest
- no sale or limited sale
- hook and line only allowable gear

In order to hold some of Florida's species to an even higher standard, a sport fish designation could also be created.

Some possible components of the definition of sport fish in Florida could be:

- no commercial harvest
- no sale
- hook and line only allowable gear
- **no recreational harvest – catch and release only**

Possible Candidates for Designation?

Game fish

Snook



Red Drum



Sport fish

Bonefish



Permit



Tarpon



If the Commission creates game fish or sport fish designations, the species on this slide are potential candidates to be designated, depending on how Florida chooses to define these designations. Snook and red drum are potential game fish candidates. Bonefish, tarpon, and permit are candidates for sport fish. Additional rule changes would be needed for these species if the designations are made.

Commission Direction Requested

If directed:

- Return with Draft Rule for defining game fish and sport fish in December
- Return at future meetings with species specific rule modifications



Commission direction is requested on these designations. If directed to proceed with this item, staff is requesting to return with a draft rule defining game fish and sport fish at the December meeting. Staff would return at future meetings with proposals for species specific rule modifications following the finalization of the definitions.

The following slides are considered back up material and are not anticipated to be part of the actual presentation to the Commission



Game fish Definitions: Other States

- Gulf states:
 - Texas: List of freshwater and saltwater fish; Some no sale
 - Louisiana: List of freshwater and saltwater fish; No sale
 - Mississippi: Freshwater fish only; Hook and line, trolling, or trotlines allowed; no sale
 - Alabama: List of freshwater fish only; Hook and line, trolling, spinner allowed; No sale
- Atlantic states with game fish definitions:
 - Georgia: List of freshwater fish only; No spearing; Some no sale
 - South Carolina: List of freshwater and saltwater fish; No spearing; No sale
 - North Carolina: Freshwater fish and several saltwater fish found inland; Hook and line; No sale



Other states in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic have lists of fish that are designated as game fish for that state; however, “game fish” means slightly different things in each state. Texas and Louisiana each have a list of game fish that includes both freshwater and saltwater fish and prohibit sale of some these game fish. Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia each have a list of game fish that only includes freshwater species. In these states, gears are limited, and sale is prohibited in Alabama. South Carolina and North Carolina each have a list of game fish that includes both freshwater and saltwater fish. Spearing is not allowed in either state, and in North Carolina hook and line is the only allowable gear. Sale is prohibited in both states.

Below is a list of the saltwater fish that are listed as game fish in nearby states:

Texas: spotted seatrout, red drum, tarpon, wahoo, tripletail, sailfish, marlin, sharks, snook, swordfish, Spanish mackerel, king mackerel

Louisiana: red drum, sailfish, marlin

South Carolina: spotted seatrout, red drum, tarpon, billfish

North Carolina: spotted seatrout, red drum, flounder (in inland waters)