



This document summarizes a proposal to provide two saltwater license-free fishing days in 2013 during which a recreational fishing license would not be required.

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Background – License-Free Fishing Days

- The Commission may designate 2 free freshwater and 2 free saltwater fishing days a year - 379.354(15) F.S.
- Applies to residents and non-residents
- Applies to recreational fishing only (not commercial)
- All other rules apply (e.g., seasons, bag, and size limits)
- Choosing these days now will allow time to publicize the dates and allow Florida's residents and visitors to plan vacations



Under 379.354(15) Florida Statutes, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has the ability to offer two free freshwater fishing days and two free saltwater fishing days a year. On these days, the FWC waives the fishing license requirement. These free fishing days apply to residents and non-residents and only apply to recreational sector. All other rules such as seasons, size limits, and bag limits still apply on these days.

By choosing these days early in 2013, staff will be able to publicize the dates and plan events well in advance and people will have the ability to plan their vacations around these days if they choose.

Impact of License-Free Fishing Days

- Emphasizes the importance of outdoor recreation and conservation
- Positive economic impact
 - Draws visitors
 - Increases fishing related purchases (tackle, fuel, hotels, etc.)
 - Introduces new participants to the sport



Recreational license-free fishing days are also a great way to emphasize the importance of outdoor recreation, conservation, and the economic benefits of recreational fishing in Florida, the Fishing Capital of the World.

They are also an excellent opportunity for Florida's residents and visitors to be introduced to the lifetime sport of saltwater and freshwater fishing. They provide an excellent opportunity for parents who don't yet have licenses to take youth fishing, or avid anglers to introduce a friend to fishing without having to purchase a license.

They create an immediate positive economic impact in the state by drawing tourists to Florida and by getting residents and visitors alike out on the water, traveling, purchasing fuel, staying in hotels, and buying fishing gear. Free fishing days also create a long-term economic impact by introducing new participants to the sport of fishing who may later buy a fishing license, fishing gear and boats, and repeatedly travel to their favorite fishing spots.

Freshwater License-Free Days

- FWC established annual freshwater dates in 2012
 - First Saturday in April – **April 6, 2013**
 - Second Saturday in June – **June 8, 2013**
 - National Fishing and Boating Week
- All other applicable freshwater fishing laws remain in effect



In 2012, the Commission established annual license-free fishing days for freshwater as the first Saturday of April and the second Saturday of June by amending rule 68A-5.006, Florida Administrative Code (FAC), *Designation of Free-Freshwater Fishing Weekend; License Requirements and Regulation Compliance*.

The April freshwater license-free fishing day for 2013 will be April 6. The June freshwater license-free fishing day, which falls on the 8th this year, coincides with National Fishing and Boating Week, which is set as the first through the second Saturday in June each year. (This year it is June 1-8.) Significant national media and events highlight this week, which is promoted by the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation. In 2012, 37 states had at least one license-free fishing day during this annual event.

All other applicable freshwater fishing laws remain in effect during these free fishing Saturdays.

Proposed Saltwater License-Free Days for 2013

- Saturday, June 1 - National Fishing and Boating Week
- Sunday, Sept. 1 - Labor Day Weekend
- All other applicable recreational saltwater fishing laws would remain in effect

If approved, waive the recreational saltwater fishing license requirement on June 1 and Sept. 1, 2013, via Executive Order



The Commission selects saltwater license-free fishing days on an annual basis. In order to adopt free saltwater fishing days for 2013, staff recommends waiving the recreational saltwater fishing license requirement for Saturday, June 1, 2013, and Sunday, September 1, 2013, via Executive Order.

The June 1 date was chosen because it is the first Saturday of National Fishing and Boating Week (June 1-8, 2013). The September 1 date was chosen because it falls on Labor Day weekend, which is the last big summer fishing weekend for many families. Snook opens to harvest September 1 and bay scallops, lobster, and gag grouper will also be open on this date. These dates for the saltwater license-free fishing days would apply for 2013 only.

All other applicable saltwater fishing laws would remain in effect during these free fishing days.

Potential 2013 Legislative Changes



- Currently, Florida Statute 379.354(15) allows 2 freshwater and 2 saltwater license free fishing days a year

Proposed legislative changes

- Saltwater license-free recreational fishing days increased from 2 to 4
- Freshwater license-free recreational fishing days increased from 2 to 4



As previously mentioned, the FWC has the ability to offer two free freshwater fishing days and two free saltwater fishing days a year according 379.354(15) Florida Statutes.

In 2012, the Commission approved a legislative proposal that would increase the total number of license-free recreational fishing days from two to four annually for both saltwater and freshwater fishing. If the legislature approves an increase, staff will revisit potential dates for freshwater and saltwater license-free fishing for 2013 and beyond. Potential additional saltwater dates could be Father's Day weekend in mid-June and/or Veterans Day weekend in November.

Staff Recommendation

Waive the license requirement for recreational saltwater fishing on June 1 and Sept. 1, 2013, via Executive Order



Staff recommends that the Commission waive the license requirement for recreational saltwater fishing on June 1 and September 1, 2013. If approved, this waiver would occur via an Executive Order.

FWC outreach events as well as local events, national media, and PSAs (Public Service Announcements) will promote the free fishing day at the beginning of National Fishing and Boating Week. Staff believes this is a great way to emphasize our core educational messages about the importance of conservation, where the funding comes from, our youth outreach programs, and the economic benefits of recreational fishing here in the Fishing Capital of the World.