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5 Feb 2005 - 31 Dec 2019

North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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2004 NC Recreational Coastal Waters Guide for Sports Fishermen - October Version

Wahoo and Dolphin EEZ Bag Limits Set October 2004

The North Carolina General Assembly has approved a recreational Saltwater Fishing License that goes into effect Jan. 1, 2006 for all of the state's coastal and ocean waters. **For more information** on this license please [view this fact sheet](#).

[Download a Printable](#) (PDF) Version of the October 2004 Rec Guide.

	State Coastal Waters (Internal & 0-3 Miles)		Exclusive Economic Zone EEZ (3-200 miles)	
Finfish Species (note symbols)	Minimum Length	Bag Limits (Per Person)	Minimum Length	Bag Limits (Per Person)
Greater Amberjack	28" FL	1/Day	28" FL	1/Day
Bluefish		15/Day Only 5 greater than 24"		15/Day
Cobia	33" FL	2/Day	33" FL	2/Day
Wahoo		(P)		2/Day
Dolphin (B)		10/Day		10/Day
King Mackerel(J) Species Identification	24" FL	3/Day	24" FL	3/Day
Spanish Mackerel(J) Species Identification	12" FL	15/Day	12" FL	15/Day
Tuna;Yellowfin, Bluefin, Bigeye (J) (H)			27" CFL	Contact NMFS for closures & limits(J), Yellowfin Tuna limit 3/Day
Sharks(J) (excluding spiny and smooth dogfish)	54-84" FL (L)	1/Vessel/Day (private boat) 1/Day (shore,charter, headboat) (L)	(F) 54" FL	1/Vessel/Day
Sharks, Atlantic Sharpnose(J)	(L)	Included in Limit Above	(F)	1/Day
Blue Marlin(H)	99" LJFL	1/vessel/trip either Blue or White Marlin	99" LJFL	1/vessel/trip either Blue or White Marlin
White Marlin (H)	66" LJFL	1/vessel/trip either Blue or White Marlin	66" LJFL	1/vessel/trip either Blue or White Marlin
Sailfish (H)	63" LJFL	1/Day	63" LJFL	1/Day
Red Drum (Channel Bass, Puppy Drum)	18-27" TL (D)	1/Day	Unlawful to Possess	
Internal Flounder	13" TL (internal) Neuse, Pamlico, and Pungo Rivers, along with Pamlico County Bays and mainland Hyde County Bays west of Bluff Pt. (G) 14" TL (in all other internal areas) (G) No Bag Limit (internal)			
Ocean Flounder See Regulations	14 TL	8/Day (G)	14 TL	8/Day
Spotted Seatrout (Speckled)	12" TL	10/Day	12" TL	10/Day
Weakfish (Gray Trout)	12" TL	7/Day	12" TL	7/Day

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2005
2006

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5 Feb 2005 - 31 Dec 2019

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Alewife and Blueback Herring (M)		25/Day		25/Day
American Eel	6" TL	50/Day	6" TL	50/Day
Scup (North of Cape Hatteras)	8" TL	50/Day	10" TL	50/Day (E)
Black Sea Bass (North of Cape Hatteras) (C)	12" TL	25/Day	12" TL	25/Day
Black Sea Bass (South of Cape Hatteras)	10" TL	20/Day	10" TL	20/Day
Red, Scamp, Yellowfin & Yellowmouth Groupers (K)	20" TL	5/Day (all groupers combined; includes only 1 speckled hind, 1 warsaw, and no more than 2 black or gag grouper, individual or combined)	20" TL	5/Day (all groupers combined; includes only 1 speckled hind, 1 warsaw, and no more than 2 black or gag grouper, individual or combined)
Black and Gag Groupers	24" TL	2/Day (See above)	24" TL	2/Day (See above)
Speckled Hind (Kitty Mitchell)		1/Vessel/Trip (See above)		1/Vessel/Trip (See above)
Warsaw Grouper		1/Vessel/Trip (See above)		1/Vessel/Trip (See above)
Red Porgy (Silver Snapper, Pinky)	14" TL	1/Day	14" TL	1/Day
Dog, Gray, Cubera, Mahogany, Queen, Schoolmaster, & Yellowtail Snappers		10/Day (Species combined; includes up to 2 Red Snapper)	12" TL	10/Day (Species combined; includes up to 2 Red Snapper)
Mutton Snapper		See Above	16" TL	See Above
Silk and Blackfin Snappers	12" TL	See Above	12" TL	See Above
Red Snapper	20" TL	2/Day - See Above	20" TL	2/Day - See Above
Vermillion Snapper	11" TL	10/Day	11" TL	10/Day
Reef Complex Species Includes sheepshead, spadefish, gray triggerfish, white grunt, knobbed porgy and more (see below) (I)		20/Day		20/Day






Prohibited Finfish Species

Coastal Waters (Internal waters and Atlantic Ocean out to 3 miles)	EEZ (Atlantic Ocean more than 3 miles)
Sturgeon, Nassau grouper, and Goliath grouper (jewfish). Prohibited sharks include: basking, white, sand tiger, and whale.	Sharks; (whale, basking, white, sand tiger, bigeye sand tiger, Atlantic angel shark, bigeye sixgill, bigeye thresher, bignose, Caribbean reef, Caribbean sharpnose, dusky, Galapagos, longfin mako, narrowtooth, night, sevengill, sixgill, and smalltail), red drum, striped bass, sturgeon, Nassau grouper, Goliath grouper (jewfish), and spearfish.

Shellfish

State Coastal and EEZ Waters
Internal and 0-200 miles

Species (note symbols)	Minimum Length	Bag Limits (Per Person)
Blue Crab	5" Carapace Width	50 crabs/day not to exceed 100 crabs/vessel/day
Hard Clam	1" Thick	100 clams/day not to exceed 200 clams/vessel/day
Oyster (N)	3" Shell Length	1 bushel/day not to exceed 2 bushels/vessel/day
Bay Scallops (N)(Q)		1/2 bushel/day not to exceed 1 bushel/vessel/day
Conchs & Whelks		10/day not to exceed 20/vessel/day
Mussels		100/day not to exceed 200/vessel/day

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<p>other limits; Atlantic Ocean year-round: 2 per person per day at 28" TL minimum; Other coastal areas (excluding Inland Waters-regulations set by Wildlife Resource Commission) year-round: 3 per person per day at 18" TL minimum.</p> <p>(B) Charter vessel (licensed by Coast Guard and holding NMFS Charter Vessel Coastal Migratory Pelagic Permit) limit of 60/trip</p> <p>(C) Open season January 1 - September 7 and September 22 - November 30.</p> <p>(D) Unlawful to possess red drum greater than 27 inches total length. Unlawful to gig, spear, or gaff red drum.</p> <p>(E) North of Cape Hatteras Scup recreational season is Jan. 1 - Feb. 29 and August 15 - Nov. 30 in the EEZ.</p> <p>(F) See prohibited species list above; Legal sharks include: sandbar, silky, tiger, blacktip, spinner, lemon, bull, nurse, smooth and scalloped and great hammerhead, blacknose, finetooth, bonnethead, shortfin mako, blue, thresher, porbeagle, and oceanic whitetip. One (1) Atlantic sharpnose (no minimum size) and one bonnethead (no minimum size) per person per trip may be landed in addition to allowable bag limits for other sharks.</p> <p>(G) Restrictions apply to gigging in the Ocean. The minimum size limit of flounder taken for recreational purposes in internal waters west of a line from Point of Marsh to Bluff Point 13 inches. The size limit east of that line and in all other internal waters is 14 inches total length.</p> <p>(H) In state or federal waters, federal permit required for Highly Migratory Species, excluding Atlantic bonito, little tunny (albacore), and blackfin tuna:(978) 281-9370 or www.nmfspermits.com. Prior to removal from vessel, all billfishes, swordfish and bluefin tuna must be reported at NC HMS reporting stations. DMF website for more details.</p>		<p>longspine porgy, sheepshead, gray triggerfish, queen triggerfish, yellow jack, crevalle jacks, bar jack, almaco jack, lesser amberjack, banded rudderfish, white grunt, margates, spadefish,scup, and hogfish, 20 per person per day in combination.</p> <p>(J) For seasons or closures for tunas, billfishes, and sharks contact NMFS Highly Migratory Species Division (1-301-713-2347 or www.nmfspermits.com or www.nmfs.noaa.gov). For snapper, grouper, and mackerels contact the South Atlantic Council (1-843-571-4366 or www.safmc.net).</p> <p>(K) Groupers in the management unit include: red, yellowfin, yellowmouth, black, warsaw, snowy, yellowedge, and misty grouper; gag, scamp, speckled hind, red hind, rock hind, graysby, and coney. No possession of Nassau and Goliath grouper.</p> <p>(L) Minimum size does not apply to Atlantic sharpnose or dogfish. Creel does not apply to dogfish. Sharks greater than 84 inches are prohibited except for tiger, thresher, bigeye thresher, shortfin mako, and hammerhead sp. Headboat or charterboat Captain or crew are not allowed a creel limit.</p> <p>(M) Season, areas, or other limits may be set by DMF. Shad (hickory and American) may only be taken with recreational commercial gear such as drift gill nets from January 1 through April 14 or by hook and line year round.</p> <p>(N) Contact DMF for seasons, areas, or other restrictions.</p> <p>(P) Pending rule change</p> <p>(Q) During the open season, scallop harvest restricted to certain hours of the day, contact DMF for all restrictions.</p>						
<p>Total length (TL) is measured from tip of snout with mouth closed to tip of compressed tail. Fork length (FL) is measured from tip of snout to middle of fork in tail. Lower jaw fork length (LJFL) is measured from lower jaw to middle of fork in tail. Curved fork length (CFL) is the measurement of the length taken in a line tracing the contour of the body from the tip of the upper jaw to the fork of the tail.</p> <p>Bag limits are not additive for state and federal waters.</p> <p>Ocean boundary is defined as water seaward of the COLREGS Demarcation Lines as indicated on National Ocean Service navigation charts</p> <p>No one may possess aboard a vessel or while engaged in fishing any fish subject to limits without head and tail attached, except for alewife and blueback herring used for bait provided not more than two fish per boat/operation may be cut at any one time. - Reference 15A NCAC 3M.0101</p> <p>IMPORTANT Check with Division of Marine Fisheries for most current minimum lengths and catch limits. 252-726-7021 or 800-682-2632 (North Carolina only). For inland water limits contact Wildlife Resources Commission 919-733-3633 or visit their website www.ncwildlife.org .</p> <p>This document is a public record under chapter 132 of the North Carolina General Statutes. Anyone who alters, defaces, mutilates or destroys it shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction subject to fines.</p> <p>Please NOTE! If you bookmark this page or place it in your "favorites" list, and then return later you may NOT be seeing the latest version of the page. Because of the way different browsers cache pages in memory you need to be sure to hit the "Refresh" or "Reload" button on your browser to be sure that you are getting the latest version.</p>								