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MASSACHUSETTS

Division of Marine Fisheries

PAUL J. DIDDATI, DIRECTOR

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Recreational Fishing

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Recreational Finfish Regulations as of Oct 02, 2003

Species	Season Open - Close	Size Limit	Possession Limit
American Eel (1)	All Year	6 in	50 fish
Black Sea Bass (2)	May 10 - Dec 31	12 in	20 fish
Blue Marlin (7)	All Year	86 in	1 fish
Bluefish	All Year	none	10 fish
Cod	Apr 01 - Nov 30 Dec 01 - Mar 31	23 in 23 in	10 fish 5 fish
Dab (Plaice)	All Year	14 in	none
Dogfish	All Year	none	none
Fluke	All Year	16.5 in	7 fish
Gray Sole (Witch)	All Year	14 in	none
Haddock (8)	All Year	21 in	none
Monkfish	All Year	17 in	none
Pollock	All Year	none	none
Redfish	All Year	9 in	none
River Herring (6)	All Year	none	25 fish
Sailfish (7)	All Year	57 in	1 fish

Scup (3)	Jan 01 - Oct 06	9 in	50 fish
Shad	All Year	none	6 fish
Sharks	<i>Federal rules apply. Consult NOAA Fisheries</i>		
Smelt	Mar 15 - Jun 15	none	none
Striped Bass (4)	All Year	28 in	2 fish
Tautog	All Year	16 in	3 fish
Tunas	<i>Federal rules apply. Consult NOAA Fisheries</i>		
Weakfish	All Year	16 in	10 fish
White Marlin (7)	All Year	62 in	1 fish
White Perch	All Year	8 in	25 fish
Windowpane	All Year	12 in	none
Winter Flounder (5)	Mar 01 - Apr 30	12 in	3 fish
	May 01 - Feb 28	12 in	8 fish
Yellowtail Flounder	All Year	13 in	none

Notes:

- 1) Subject to regulation by the Division and local community. Consult local regulations
- 2) Black sea bass are measured from the tip of the snout or jaw (mouth closed) to the farthest extremity of the tail, not including the tail filament
- 3) Scup has a recreational limit of 50 fish per angler with a maximum of 100 fish per private vessel with 2 or more fishermen on board. Anglers on board party/charter boats are allowed 100 scup perangler.
- 4) Bass must be kept whole, with head, tail and body intact - no mutilation permitted (other than evisceration). The discard of dead, legal size striped bass is prohibited. To prohibit the practice of high-grading, recreational fishermen may not retain legal-sized striped bass and release said fish in favor of another larger legal-sized striped bass captured subsequently. It shall be unlawful to keep striped bass alive in the water by attaching a line or chain to the fish or placing the fish in a live well or holding car
- 5) Winter flounder may not be taken from Mount Hope Bay and its tributaries except recreational fishermen may take 4 fish between Apr 13 and May 19 and between Sep 28 and Oct 28
- 6) River herring may not be taken on Tuesdays, Thursdays or Sundays. It is prohibited to catch river herring with any net other than hand-held dip nets. River herring are also subject to regulation by the local community. Consult local regulations
- 7) Billfish are measured from the tip of the lower jaw to the tail fork
- 8) Federal rules apply beyond state waters. consult [NOAA Fisheries](#).

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Recreational Shellfish Regulations		
Species	Minimum Size	Other Restrictions
Blue Crab	4 1/8" shell width (spine to spine)	egg bearers cannot be taken; 50 crabs/day; no pots; closed season is 1/1 - 4/30, inclusive
Other Edible Crabs (excludes green crabs)	none	same as for blue crab
Lobster	3 1/4" carapace length 5" carapace maximum length on lobster taken from the Gulf of Maine (includes Cape Cod Bay)	egg bearers cannot be taken; v-notched female lobster cannot be taken; state license required
Bay Scallop	well defined growth ring	consult town regulations

Conch	2 ¾" shell width	consult town regulations
Oyster	3" shell diameter	consult town regulations
Quahog	1" shell thickness	consult town regulations
Sea Scallop	3 ½" shell height	
Softshell Clam	2" shell diameter	consult town regulations
Surf Clam	5" shell diameter	consult town regulations

Regulations are subject to change; contact the Division for details (617) 626-1520.

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Anadromous Fish: Saltwater fish that return to fresh water systems to reproduce.

Angling: Fishing with handline or rod, with naturally or artificially baited hook.

Closed Season: The time when fish cannot be lawfully taken.

Fish: Any animal life inhabiting the ocean or connecting waters, including crustacea or marine fish, whether free swimming or free moving, any shellfish or sea worms, whether or not imbedded in the soil.

Coastal Waters Under the Jurisdiction of the Commonwealth: All the waters within the rise and fall of the tide extending out to three miles from an established coastal baseline and all the waters of Massachusetts Bay, Cape Cod Bay, and Nantucket Sound. It does not include the waters within or above any fishladder or dam, nor the waters above any tidal bound established by DEP in streams flowing to the sea.

Minimum Size Limits are measured as the greatest **straight** line (not curved over the body) length in inches as measured on a fish with its mouth closed from the anterior tip of the jaw or snout to the farthest extremity of the tail. For fish with forked tails, the upper and lower fork may be squeezed together to measure the tail extremity.

Sale of Fish: A commercial permit is required to sell fish.

Snagging or Snatching: The taking of fish not attracted by bait or artificial lure with hooks, gangs or lures whether baited or unbaited, in a manner as to pierce and hook a fish in any part of the body other than the mouth.

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Snagging, Snatching of Anadromous Fish: including shad, smelt, white perch, striped bass, trout, and salmon, but excluding alewives or river herring is prohibited.

The taking of striped bass by any other means other than hook and line is prohibited.

The discard of dead, legal size striped bass is prohibited.

The taking of billfish using other than a rod and reel is prohibited.

The taking of Atlantic Salmon, Sturgeon, all Marine Mammals, all sea turtles and the Diamond Back Terrapin from Massachusetts waters is prohibited.

For anyone, except the owner, to handle destroy or molest any lobster or crab pot or other fishing gear including any gear swept up on the shore, beaches or flats whether public or private, or to take fish there from is illegal.

To take crabs by pot without a permit is illegal.

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Presently, there is no license requirement for recreational saltwater angling, however, a commercial permit is required when any fish are sold.

Non Commercial Lobster Permits are required to fish for or take lobsters for personal use, using a maximum of 10 pots. This authorizes the holder and members of the holder's immediate family, residing in the same residence, to fish for and take lobsters. The immediate family is defined as the spouse, parents, children, grandparents, sisters and brothers of the permit holder. This permit may be endorsed for **diving** by only the permit holder. Other family members may purchase additional permits for diving only.

> [Renew your Non-Commercial Lobster Permit online](#)

Recreational Shellfishing is permitted in designated clean areas and regulated by the individual Towns. Contact your Town department of Natural Resources for local regulations and permit acquisition.

Note: A person may, without a special permit, use a small net of **no more than 200 square feet** inside those inshore waters listed in 322 CMR 4.02(2) or inside any estuary, embayment, salt pond, tidal creek, river, or an other similar body of inshore water for the sole purpose of obtaining bait fish for personal use.

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DMF Recreational Fishing/Research Programs

Tagging - Periodically the Division conducts tagging studies of a particular finfish species to develop a better understanding of local movements, habitat preference, migration, growth, and general abundance. The angler plays a significant role in retrieving valuable data. Carefully examine your catch for tags. If found, record the tag number if returning fish to water, or snip off the tag if keeping fish. Contact the address printed on the tag and you will be briefed on the tagging study and may even receive a reward. Note: Recently, snapper bluefish, striped bass, winter flounder, and cunner have been tagged in our waters. The Division participates in federal tagging programs as well.

Saltwater Fishing Derby - Our Division sponsors an annual fishing derby. Contact our Pocasset office for details.

Catch & Release - The Division encourages the proper handling of fish that are to be released. Catch and release practitioners should follow accepted handling conventions such as reduced play time, minimizing exposure to air, and minimizing physical damage from hooking and handling to ensure the highest possible chances for survival.

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Division of Marine Fisheries Sportfish Biologists

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Boston, MA 02114
(617) 626-1520
FAX: (617) 626-1509

Sportfish Biologists

Annisquam River Station
30 Emerson Avenue
Gloucester, MA 01930
(978) 282-0308
FAX: (617) 727-3337

Pocasset Office
50 A Portside Drive
Pocasset, MA 02559
(508) 563-1779
FAX: (508) 563-5482

[Brad Chase](#) - North Shore
[Rusty Iwanowicz](#) - Rockport to NH

[Paul Caruso](#) - Cape Cod
- South Shore
- Wareham to Westport

Martha's Vineyard Office
P.O. Box 68
Vineyard Haven, MA 02568
(508) 693-4157
FAX: (508) 693-0600 call first

[Greg Skomal](#) - Islands

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Division of Law Enforcement

Hewitts Cove	(617) 727 - 0082
Radio Room	(617) 727 - 6398
North Coastal Bureau	(978) 283 - 7764
Toll Free Number	(800) 632 - 8075

For more information see chapter 130 of the Massachusetts General Laws and Code of Massachusetts Regulations, Title 322.

The rules and regulations are subject to change without notice. Contact the Division of Marine Fisheries for current regulations.

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Questions or comments
regarding this site should be sent to
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