

2018 NORTH CAROLINA RECREATIONAL COASTAL WATERS GUIDE FOR SPORTS FISHERMEN – March Version

****IMPORTANT** CHECK WITH DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES FOR MOST CURRENT MINIMUM LENGTHS AND CREEL LIMITS.**

252-726-7021 OR 800-682-2632 OR www.ncmarinefisheries.net

You can also download the Fish Rules Mobile App at <https://fishrulesapp.com/>

Persons engaged in recreational fishing in North Carolina coastal waters are required to possess a Coastal Recreational Fishing License in accordance with G.S. 113-174.1

	STATE COASTAL WATERS (Internal and 0-3 miles)		FEDERAL MANAGEMENT INFORMATION
FINFISH SPECIES (note symbols)	Minimum Length	Bag Limits (per person)	
Bluefish	None	15/Day, only 5 greater than 24" TL	https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable/species/bluefish/index.html
Cobia	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS		http://safmc.net/regulations/
Wahoo	None	2/Day	
Dolphin (B)	None	10/Day	
King Mackerel (H)	24" FL	3/Day	
Spanish Mackerel (H)	12" FL	15/Day	
Tuna: Bluefin, Bigeye and Yellowfin (G)	Bigeye and Yellowfin tuna 27" Curved FL	Yellowfin tuna 3/Day	https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/topic/atlantic-highly-migratory-species
Smoothhounds, Smooth Dogfish and Spiny Dogfish	None	None	https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable/species/sdogfish/index.html
Sharks (G)	See most recent DMF proclamation at www.ncmarinefisheries.net		https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/topic/atlantic-highly-migratory-species
Blue Marlin (G)	99" LJFL	1 per vessel per trip, either blue marlin or white marlin	
White Marlin (G)	66" LJFL		
Sailfish (G)	63" LJFL		
Red Drum (Channel Bass, Puppy Drum) (C) ▲	18" – 27" TL	1/Day	https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2017-title50-vol13/pdf/CFR-2017-title50-vol13-sec697-7.pdf
Flounder ▲	15" TL	4/Day	https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable/recfishing/regs/index.html
Spotted Seatrout (Speckled Trout) ▲	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS		No Federal Regulations
Weakfish (Gray Trout) ▲	12" TL	1/Day	https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2017-title50-vol13/pdf/CFR-2017-title50-vol13-sec697-7.pdf
Sheepshead	10" FL	10/Day	No Federal Regulations
Black Drum (C)	14" – 25" TL	10/Day	No Federal Regulations
Tarpon	None	1/Day	No Federal Regulations
Striped Bass	(A)	(A)	https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2017-title50-vol13/pdf/CFR-2017-title50-vol13-sec697-7.pdf
American Shad (D)	None	(D)	No Federal Regulations
Hickory Shad (D)	None	(D)	No Federal Regulations
Alewife and Blueback Herring	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS		No Federal Regulations
American Eel (E)	9" TL	25/Day	No Federal Regulations
Scup (North of Cape Hatteras only)	8" TL	50/Day	https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable/recfishing/regs/index.html
Black Sea Bass (North of Cape Hatteras)	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS		https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sustainable/recfishing/regs/index.html
Snappers, Groupers, Porgys, Triggerfish, Jacks, Tilefish, Grunts, Spadefishes, Wrasses and Sea Basses (H)	See the most recent Snapper/Grouper Complex recreational DMF proclamation at www.ncmarinefisheries.net		http://safmc.net/regulations/
Mullet (striped and white)	200/Day (species combined)		No Federal Regulations

PROHIBITED FINFISH SPECIES

COASTAL WATERS (Internal waters and Atlantic Ocean out to 3 miles)

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, sandbar, silky, sevengill, sixgill, and smalltail. Other finfish: sturgeon, Nassau grouper, Goliath grouper (jewfish), Warsaw grouper, speckled hind and red snapper.

SHELLFISH and CRUSTACEANS		STATE COASTAL AND EEZ WATERS (Internal and 0-200 miles)	
		Minimum Size	Bag Limits (per person)
BLUE CRAB (F)	5" Carapace Width		50 Crabs/Day not to exceed 100 Crabs/Vessel/Day
STONE CRAB CLAWS (J)	2 ¾ Propodus Length		UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS from June 15 – August 15 (no possession limit during open season)
HARD CLAM	1" Thick		100 Clams/Day not to exceed 200 Clams/Vessel/Day
OYSTER (I)	3" Shell Length		1 Bushel Oysters/Day not to exceed 2 Bushels Oysters/Vessel/Day
BAY SCALLOP			SEASON CLOSED – UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS
CONCHS and WHELKS	None		10/Day not to exceed 20/Vessel/Day
MUSSELS	None		100/Day not to exceed 200/Vessel/Day
SHRIMP	Closed Shrimping Area	None	4 quarts (heads on) or 2 ½ quarts (heads off) of shrimp per person per day (Cast Net Only)
	Open Shrimping Area	None	48 quarts (heads on) or 30 quarts (heads off) of shrimp per person per day or if vessel is used, per vessel per day (RCGL max. limit of 2/Vessel)

SYMBOLS TO LOOK FOR:

- (A) Albemarle Sound Management Area: contact DMF for seasons, areas or other limits; Atlantic Ocean year-round: 1 per person per day at 28" TL minimum; Other Coastal Fishing Waters: 2 per person per day at 18" TL minimum except unlawful to possess between 22" – 27" TL in Joint Fishing Waters. This includes hybrid bass. Season: October through April, statewide by Proclamation. Moratorium in Cape Fear River system.
- (B) Limit of 10 per person per day or 60 per trip, whichever is less. On headboats, limit is 10 per person per day. No sale of recreational bag limit on vessels operating as charter or headboats.
- (C) Unlawful to possess red drum greater than 27" TL. Unlawful to gig, spear, or gaff red drum. One **black drum** per person per day over 25" TL is allowed.
- (D) For aggregate creel limits for American shad and hickory shad, **see the most recent DMF proclamation**. Unlawful to take or possess American shad from the Atlantic Ocean.
- (E) Season open January 1 – August 31, except year round when taken by baited pots.
- (F) Mature female crabs are exempt from minimum size limit. It is illegal to possess immature female crabs at any time and it is illegal to possess dark sponge crabs from April 1 – April 30.
- (G) In state or federal waters, federal permit required for Highly Migratory Species, tunas, billfishes, swordfish and sharks (excluding Atlantic bonito, little tunny (false albacore), and blackfin tuna): <https://hmspermits.noaa.gov/> 978-281-9370. Prior to removal from vessel, all billfishes, swordfish and bluefin tuna must be reported at NC HMS reporting stations. DMF website for more details. For seasons, bag limits, size limits or closures for tunas, billfishes, and sharks contact NMFS Highly Migratory Species Division 800-894-5528.
- (H) For seasons, bag limits and size limits on snapper, grouper, and mackerels contact the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council 843-571-4366 or www.safmc.net, and **see the most recent Snapper Grouper recreational DMF proclamation**.
- (I) Contact DMF or visit www.ncmarinefisheries.net for seasons, areas, or other restrictions. Oyster season October 15 – March 31 unless closed earlier by proclamation.
- (J) Propodus (forearm) length is measured by a straight line from elbow to the tip of the lower immovable finger. The propodus (forearm) is defined as the largest section of the claw assembly that has both a moveable and immovable finger and is located farthest from the body of the crab. Unlawful to possess stone crab bodies or fail to immediately return to the waters from which taken. Unlawful to use a device to take stone crabs that can puncture, crush, or injure the crab body, such as gigs, spears, grabs, hooks, or similar devices. Unlawful to remove, take or possess stone crab claws from June 15 through August 15 (no possession limit during open season).
- ▲ Size and creel limits for spotted seatrout, flounder, red drum and gray trout taken in inland waters are the same as the recreational limits for those species in adjacent joint and coastal waters.

Total length (TL) is measured from tip of snout with mouth closed to top 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. **Anglers cannot catch both a federal and state bag limit for the same species on the same trip.**

Ocean boundary is defined as water seaward of the COLREGS Demarcation Lines as indicated on National Ocean Service navigations charts.

No one may possess aboard a vessel or while engaged in fishing any fish subject to limits without head and tail attached, except for mullet when used for bait and hickory shad when used for bait provided not more than two fish per boat/operation may be cut at any one time – Reference 15A NCAC 3M .0101

Morehead City Office (24 hours)
800-682-2632 or
252-726-7021

Elizabeth City Office
800-338-7805 or
252-264-3911

Manteo Office
252-473-5734

Washington Office
800-338-7804 or
252-946-6481

Wilmington Office
800-248-4536 or
910-796-7215

NMFS (Fed. Reg.)
301-427-8505

THIS FLYER IS EFFECTIVE March 1, 2018 AND IS FOR GENERAL INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES AND HAS NO LEGAL FORCE OR EFFECT. **FISHERY RULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.** THESE RESTRICTIONS APPLY TO FISH TAKEN FOR RECREATIONAL PURPOSES AND INCLUDE HOOK AND LINE. Updated State regulations can be found at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/recreational-fishing-size-and-bag-limits> and updated Recreational Commercial Gear License information can be found at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/recreational-commercial-gear-license>. Issued 3/1/18. This document is printed on recycled paper.

FOR INLAND WATER FISHING REGULATIONS, CALL WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMISSION 919-707-0220 OR WWW.NCWILDLIFE.ORG

STATE AND FEDERAL REGULATIONS CAN ALSO BE FOUND AT www.FishRulesApp.com

Fish Rules App

State and Federal regulations from NC to TX!





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