

NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Marine Fisheries - Recreational Fishing Size and Bag Limits

DMF - Homepage

- Recreational Fishing
 - Fishing Licenses and Permits
 - **Size and Bag Limits**
 - Coastal Fishing Information
 - Fish Tagging Program
 - Who to Contact About Fishing N.C.
 - Fishing Tournaments
 - Striped Bass Information
 - Red Drum Information
 - Lionfish Information
 - Weather and Tides for Anglers
 - Sunrise-Sunset Times
 - Public Notices and News Releases
 - Coastal Recreational Fishing Programs (CRFL)
- Commercial Fishing
- Proclamations
- Proclamations - Polluted Areas
- News Releases
- Information and Programs
- Observer Program
- Statistics, Reports and Data
- N.C. Marine Patrol
- Fishery Management Plans
- Marine Fisheries Commission
- Educational Resources
- Rules and Regulations
- Habitat and Enhancement
- Shellfish Sanitation and Recreational Water Quality
- Stock Status Reports
- Carcass Collection Program
- Employment Opportunities
- Vision Statement
- DMF Library Search



N.C. Recreational Coastal Waters Guide for Sports Fishermen

Current Version Effective: August 9, 2016

(Website chart reflects the most recent changes to size and bag limits)

[CLICK HERE for printer-friendly version](#)

[Smartphone and tablet users – view as mobile device webpage](#)

Coastal Recreational Fishing License: Persons engaged in recreational fishing in North Carolina coastal waters are required to possess a Coastal Recreational Fishing License in accordance with G.S. 113-174.2

See also: [Fish Identification](#) and [Recreational Fishing Reports](#)

[Why do we have fishing regulations?](#)

For *inland* fishing regulations, contact Wildlife Resources Commission 919-707-0220

or visit their website www.ncwildlife.org

	State Coastal Waters (Internal and 0-3 Miles)		Exclusive Economic Zone EEZ (3-200 miles)	
Finfish Species (note symbols, pg.2)	Minimum Length	Bag Limits (Per Person)	Minimum Length	Bag Limits (Per Person)
Alewife and blueback herring	None	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS	None	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS
Amberjack , greater	28" FL	1/Day	28" FL	1/Day
Bass , striped See striped bass details	(A)	(A)	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS	
Bluefish	None	15/Day Only 5 greater than 24" TL	None	15/Day
Cobia (M)	37" FL	1/Day/2 per vessel	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS	
Dolphin (B)	None	10/Day	None	10/Day
Drum, black	14"-25" TL (C)	10/Day	14"-25" TL (C)	10/Day
Drum , red ▲ (Channel bass, puppy drum)	18-27" TL (C)	1/Day	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS	

JUL AUG SEP
09
2015 2016 2017

212 captures
15 Jul 2011 - 15 Jul 2019

▼ About this capture

[Gulf, Southern, summer](#)
Grouper ([H](#), [I](#), [J](#), [K](#))

UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS
SHALLOW WATER GROUPE
JAN. 1 THROUGH APRIL 30
(SEE NOTE [J](#))

UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS
SHALLOW WATER GROUPE
JAN. 1 THROUGH APRIL 30
(SEE NOTE [J](#))

Grouper
Red, scamp, yellowfin,
yellowmouth grouper
and tilefish (no size
limit on tilefish)

20" TL 3/Day (all grouper
combined; includes 1
golden tilefish and no
more than 1 black or
gag grouper, individual
or combined)
([J](#)) & ([K](#))

20" TL 3/Day (all grouper
combined; includes 1
golden tilefish and no
more than 1 black or
gag grouper, individual
or combined)
([J](#)) & ([K](#))

Grouper
black and [gag](#)

24" TL 1/Day (See above)

24" TL 1/Day
(See above)

Grouper, snowy ([K](#))

1/vessel/day (included in 3 grouper
aggregate)
Harvest allowed May 1 through Aug. 31

1/vessel/day (included in 3 grouper
aggregate)
Harvest allowed May 1 through Aug. 31

Hogfish
(Hog snapper) ([I](#))

12" FL 5/Day

12" FL 5/Day

[Mackerel](#), king ([I](#))
[Species Identification](#)

24" FL 3/Day

24" FL 3/Day

[Mackerel](#), Spanish ([I](#))
[Species Identification](#)

12" FL 15/Day

12" FL 15/Day

[Marlin](#), blue ([G](#))

99" LJFL 1/vessel/trip either
Blue or White Marlin

99" LJFL State rules apply when
landing

[Marlin](#), white ([G](#))

66" LJFL 1/vessel/trip either
Blue or White Marlin

66" LJFL State rules apply when
landing

Mullet
(Striped and white)

None 200/Day
(species combined)

None

[Porgy](#), red
(Silver snapper, pinky)

14" TL 3/Day

14" TL 3/Day

[Sailfish](#) ([G](#))

63" LJFL 1/Day

63" LJFL

Scup
(North of Cape Hatteras
only)

8" TL 50/Day

9" TL 50/Day

[Seatrout](#), spotted
(speckled)▲

14" TL 4/Day

14" TL 4/Day

[Sea bass](#), black
(North of Cape
Hatteras) ([D](#))

12.5" TL 15/day

12.5" TL 15/day

Sea bass, black
(South of Cape
Hatteras)

13" TL 5/Day

13" TL 5/Day

Shad, American ([O](#))

None ([O](#))

UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS

Shad, hickory ([O](#))

None ([O](#))

None 10/Day

[Sharks](#) ([E](#), [I](#), [L](#))
(excluding
smoothhound sharks)

([E](#), [I](#), [L](#)) 1/Vessel/Day

([E](#), [I](#), [L](#)) 1/Vessel/Day

Go

JUL

AUG

SEP

◀

09

▶

2015

2016

2017

▼ About this capture

212 captures

15 Jul 2011 - 15 Jul 2019

Sharks, Atlantic sharpnose , smooth dogfish and bonnethead (E)	None	(E)	None	(E)
Sheepshead	10" FL	10/Day	State rules apply when landing	State rules apply when landing
Snapper-Grouper Complex Species Includes spadefish, gray triggerfish , white grunt , knobbed porgy and more (see notes H and I)	N/A	20/Day	N/A	20/Day
Snappers: Gray, cubera, queen, yellowtail, silk and blackfin	12" TL	10/Day (Species combined)	12" TL	10/Day (Species combined)
Snapper, mutton	16" TL	See Above	16" TL	See Above
Snapper, lane	8" TL	See Above	8" TL	See Above
Snapper, red	UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS		UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS	
Snapper , vermillion	12" TL	5/Day	12" TL	5/Day
Tarpon	None	1/Day	None	1/Day
Tuna (I); bluefin (G), yellowfin and bigeye	Yellowfin 27" CFL Bigeye 27" CFL	Bigeye and Yellowfin 3 per day	Bigeye and Yellowfin tuna 27" CFL	Yellowfin Tuna 3 per day
Wahoo	None	2/Day	None	2/Day
Weakfish (gray trout)▲	12" TL	1/Day	12" TL	State rules apply when landing
Wreckfish (P)	None	1/Vessel/Day	None	1/Vessel/Day

See pages 2 and 3 for additional information

Pages: 1 2 3

Next

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