

<https://webapps.mrc.virginia.gov/public/reports/swrecfishingrules.php>

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18 captures

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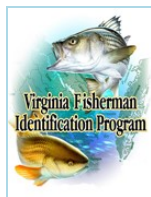
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Virginia Marine Resources Commission

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Virginia's Recreational Fishing Regulations

RECREATIONAL FISHING REGULATIONS FOR VIRGINIA'S MARINE WATERS

It is the angler's responsibility to know and abide by all current regulations and laws. Individuals must obtain a saltwater recreational fishing license which entitles them to use rod and reel (hook and line), spear or gig, and hand line, cast net, dip net or two eel pots; other rules may apply to these specific gears. For detailed fish identification information, download our [Angler's Guide Fish ID](#)

Regulation Cards are available at most tackle/bait shops and available below.

[2018 Finfish Regulation Card](#)
[2018 Striped Bass Regulation Card](#)
[Size/Possession Limits Summary Sheet](#)

Fish illustrations courtesy Duane Raver(may not be reproduced without permission).

ALEWIFE



[Regulation 4 VAC 20-1260-10 et seq.](#)

Moratorium on River Herring, illegal to possess.

AMBERJACK



[Regulation 4 VAC 20-510-10 et seq.](#)

Minimum Size Limit: 32 IN.

Possession Limit: 2 per person

Capture Citation: RELEASE ONLY

Release Citation: 50 IN.

State Record: 118 lbs, 1986, Mark J. Roberts

AMERICAN EEL



[Regulation 4 VAC 20-500-10 et seq.](#)

Minimum Size Limit: 9 IN.

Possession Limit: 25 per person

BLACK DRUM (DRUM.DRUMFISH)

Important Information

[Saltwater Recreational Fishing License Requirements](#)

Individual license required in Chesapeake Bay, and its tributaries, and Virginia ocean waters unless fishing on licensed pier, licensed charter boat or licensed private boat; or specifically exempted. Click on link to see specific information on licensing requirements, license fees, or license agents.

Cast Net.....License is not required to use cast net to catch small quantities of mullet, menhaden, or minnows for personal use (fish may not be sold, traded or bartered). Note too that saltwater recreational fishing license holders may also use a cast net to keep other species of fish for personal use without buying an additional cast net license. Code of Virginia § 28.2-302.1 says the recreational saltwater license may be used for recreational, non-commercial use of a rod-and-reel (hook and line), handline, spear or gig, cast net, or up to two eel pots.

Measurements.....Size limits are total length measurements; fish must be measured tip of nose to tip of tail, except black sea bass, which are measured from tip of nose along the centerline of the body, to the center of the tail.

Altering fish while on board boat.....alteration of fish such that the fish can not be identified or properly measured may not be legal. Consult [Regulation 4 VAC 20-580](#) for more information.

Snagging.....Illegal to snag, or attempt to snag, any fish.

No Sale.....Sale or barter of recreationally caught fish is prohibited.

[Spearfishing](#) summary of recreational spearfishing size and possession limits

ALL REGULATIONS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Regulations affecting Virginia fishermen are established by the Commonwealth of Virginia, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and federal management agencies; these regulations are subject to review and change throughout the calendar year.

[Recently updated or added regulations](#)

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About this capture



[Regulation 4 VAC 20-320-10 et seq.](#)

Minimum Size Limit: 16 IN.

Possession Limit: 1 per person

Capture Citation: 80 Lbs

Release Citation: 46 IN.

State Record: 111 lbs, 1973, Betty D. Hall

BLACK SEA BASS (SEA BASS)



[Regulation 4 VAC 20-950-10 et seq.](#)

Regulations for black sea bass caught in federal waters are subject to change. Please contact NMFS.

It shall be unlawful for any person fishing recreationally to take, catch, or possess any black sea bass, from February 1 through February 28, without first having obtained a Recreational Black Sea Bass Permit from the Marine Resources Commission. It shall be unlawful for any black sea bass permittee to fail to contact the Marine Resources Commission Operation Station at (800) 541-4646 before returning to shore at the end of the fishing trip during the February black sea bass season. The permittee shall provide the Operations Station with his name, VMRC ID number, the point of landing, a description of the vessel, and an estimated return to shore time. Permits can be obtained online [here](#) or at an [MRC Licensing Agent](#). Reporting can be done online through the [Saltwater Journal](#) or using forms provided by the VMRC.

Minimum Size Limit: 12.5 IN.

Possession Limit: 15 per person

Season: Feb 1-Feb 28, May 15-Sept 21, Oct 22-Dec 31

Capture Citation: 5 Lbs

Release Citation: NOT ELIGIBLE

State Record: 10 lbs 4 oz, 2000, Allen P. Paschall

BLUEBACK HERRING



[Regulation 4 VAC 20-1260-10 et seq.](#)

Moratorium on River Herring, illegal to possess.

BLUE CATFISH - Applicable DGIF Regulations



Visit Department of Game and Inland Fisheries website (dgif.virginia.gov) for full regulations.

1 blue catfish per day over 32 inches

BLUEFISH



[Regulation 4 VAC 20-450-10 et seq.](#)

Minimum Size Limit: None

Possession Limit: 10 per person

Capture Citation: 16 Lbs

Release Citation: 36 IN.

State Record: 25 lbs 4 oz, 1986, Gayle E. Cozzens

[COBIA](#)



[Regulation 4 VAC 20-510-10 et seq.](#)

Minimum Size Limit: 40 IN.

Possession Limit: 1 per person, 3 Per Vessel; whichever is more restrictive

Season: June 1 through Sept 30

Capture Citation: 55 Lbs

Release Citation: 50 IN.

State Record: 109 lbs, 2006, Joseph F. Berberich, II

The 2018 recreational cobia regulations are as follows: 40-inch, total length, minimum size limit; 1-fish daily possession limit or 3-fish-daily vessel limit, whichever is more restrictive; only one fish per vessel per day may be greater than 50 inches in total length; an open season of June 1 through September 30; and gaffing is now allowed to land a cobia while fishing recreationally. All anglers, captains, and guides fishing for cobia must obtain a Recreational Cobia Permit from the Commission and report all harvest and cobia fishing activity. Permits can be obtained online [here](#) or at an [MRC Licensing Agent](#). Reporting can be done online through the [Saltwater Journal](#) or using forms provided by the VMRC.

CREVALLE JACK



Capture Citation: RELEASE ONLY

Release Citation: 40 IN.

State Record: 48 lbs 12 oz, 1993, Charles McCaskill, III

CROAKER



Capture Citation: 3 Lbs

Release Citation: 20 IN.

State Record: 8 lbs 11 oz, 2007, Norman T. Jenkins

DOLPHIN



Info: Managed by SAFMC - <http://www.safmc.net/>

State Record: 71 lbs 8 oz, 1991, Don Dorey

GREY TROUT (WEAKFISH)



[Regulation 4 VAC 20-380-10 et seq.](#)

Minimum Size Limit: 12 IN.

Possession Limit: 1 per person

Capture Citation: 9 Lbs

Release Citation: 30 IN.

State Record: 19 lbs, 1983, Philip W. Halstead

GROUPERS



[Regulation 4 VAC 20-1120-10 et seq.](#)

Minimum Size Limit: None

Possession Limit: 1 per person

State Record: Snowy Grouper, 70 lbs 7 oz, 2011, Roger C. Burnley

Any private recreational fishing vessel, charter boat or head boat, must obtain a Tilefish and Grouper Landing Permit, for that vessel, from the Marine Resources Commission in order to possess aboard, or land any tilefish or grouper, harvested recreationally. If the vessel is USCG or DGIF registered this no-cost permit can be obtained [online](#) or at a [MRC Licensing Agent](#).

KINGFISH (ROUNDHEAD)



Capture Citation: 1 Lb 8 oz

Release Citation: 16 IN.

State Record: 2 lbs 13 oz, 2002, Chip Watters

KING MACKEREL



[Regulation 4 VAC 20-540-10 et seq.](#)

Minimum Size Limit: 27 IN.

Possession Limit: 3 per person

Capture Citation: 20 Lbs

Release Citation: NOT ELIGIBLE

State Record: 63 lbs 1 oz, 2007, Susan M. Smith

POMPANO

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▼ About this capture



Capture Citation: 1.5 Lbs

Release Citation: 16 IN.

State Record: 5 lbs 10 oz, 1992, Robert T. Long

RED DRUM (CHANNEL BASS, REDFISH)



[Regulation 4 VAC 20-280-10 et seq.](#)

Minimum Size Limit: Min 18 IN. to Max 26 IN.

Possession Limit: 3 per person

Capture Citation: RELEASE ONLY

Release Citation: 46 IN.

State Record: 85 lbs 4 oz, 1981, Herman Moore

SCUP (PORGY)



[Regulation 4 VAC 20-910-10 et seq.](#)

Minimum Size Limit: 8 IN.

Possession Limit: 30 per person

State Record: 5 lbs 5 oz, 1978, Charles B. Haines, Sr.

SHAD. AMERICAN



[Regulation 4 VAC 20-530-10 et seq.](#)

Illegal to possess American shad.

SHARKS (All species except smooth and spiny dog sharks)*



[NMFS Shark Identification](#)

[Regulation 4 VAC 20-490-10 et seq.](#)

Minimum Size Limit: 54 inches fork length **

Possession Limit: 1 per vessel ***

A non-boat assisted shore angler is entitled to a vessel possession limit

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Federal waters, beyond the Three Mile Limit governed by different regulations set by the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council.

***Recreationally Prohibited Species** – It is illegal to take, catch or possess any shark from the "Recreationally Prohibited Species" list, as defined in Regulation 4 VAC 20-490-10 et seq., including but not limited to the following species commonly encountered in Virginia: Atlantic Angel, Dusky, Sand Tiger, Sandbar, White, and Bigeye Thresher Sharks. No size or possession limits apply to Dog Sharks.

****All sharks** (All species except Spiny Dog Sharks) must be landed with head and fins attached; hammerhead sharks must be 78 inches fork length (FL) or greater, no minimum size applies to Atlantic Sharpnose, Bonnethead, Blacknose, and Finetooth Sharks.

*****Possession limit for Atlantic Sharpnose and Bonnethead Sharks** is 1 per person.

Sharks may only be taken by handline or rod and reel; Spearing and bowfishing illegal.

Capture Citation: RELEASE ONLY

Release Citation: 72 IN.

SHEEPSHEAD



[Regulation 4 VAC 20-1110-10 et seq.](#)

Minimum Size Limit: None

Possession Limit: 4 per person

Capture Citation: 10 Lbs

Release Citation: 24 IN.

State Record: 20 lbs 12 oz, 2005, Arun Nhek

SPADEFISH



[Regulation 4 VAC 20-970-10 et seq.](#)

Minimum Size Limit: None

Possession Limit: 4 per person

Capture Citation: 9 Lbs

Release Citation: 22 IN.

State Record: 14 lbs 14 oz, 2009, Roland E. Murphy

SPANISH MACKEREL



[Regulation 4 VAC 20-540-10 et seq.](#)

Minimum Size Limit: 14 IN.

Possession Limit: 15 per person

Capture Citation: 4 Lbs

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About this capture

SPECKLED TROUT (SPOTTED SEATROUT)

[Regulation 4 VAC 20-280-10 et seq.](#)

Minimum Size Limit: 14 IN.

Possession Limit: 5 per person

Season: 5 per Person, only 1 greater than 24"

Capture Citation: 5 Lbs

Release Citation: 24 IN.

State Record: 16 lbs, 1977, Bill Katko

SPOT

Capture Citation: 1 Lbs

Release Citation: 13 IN.

State Record: 2 lbs 6 oz, 1980, Nathan Dryden

STRIPED BASS (ROCKFISH, STRIPED)

[Regulation 4 VAC 20-252-10 et seq.](#)

Virginia Coastal Seasons

January 1 through March 31

May 16 through December 31

Minimum Size Limit: 28 inches

Possession Limit: 1 per person (Effective: 1/1/2015)

Note that there is a coastal trophy season from May 1 to May 15; the regulations summarized below for Virginia Trophy Seasons apply to the coastal trophy season.

Coastal regulations apply in Virginia's Territorial Sea, plus all of the creeks, bays, inlets, and tributaries on the seaside of Accomack County, Northhampton County (including areas east of the causeway from Fisherman Island to the mainland) and the City of Virginia Beach (including federal areas and state parks fronting on the Atlantic Ocean and east and south of the point where the shoreward boundary of the Territorial Sea joins the mainland at Cape Henry). [Click here for map of coastal boundary near the CBBT.](#)

Virginia Trophy Seasons

Coastal Area (May 1-15); Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries (May 1 through June 15)

Minimum Size Limit: 36 inches

Possession Limit: 1 per person

Additional Trophy Season Regulations:

[A no-cost Trophy Season Permit](#) is required to participate in the Spring Trophy Season. Additional Trophy Season Regulations: [Catch Report Required](#); no possession of 36" or greater striped bass in the [Spawning Reaches](#) May 1 through June 15. Trophy Season regulations apply in Virginia's Territorial Sea and the Chesapeake Bay and its Virginia tributary rivers, except for the tributary rivers emptying into the Potomac River (see note below for more information on Potomac River striper regulations). Permit can be obtained [online](#) or at a [MRC Licensing Agent](#).

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About this capture

Minimum Size Limit: 20 inches

Maximum Size Limit: 28 inches

Possession Limit: 2 per person

* 1 fish of the 2 fish possession limit may be larger than 36 inches (catch report required if striped bass 36" or greater is kept); No possession of 36" or greater striped bass in the [Spawning Reaches](#) May 1 through June 15.

Chesapeake Bay Fall Season

October 4 through December 31

Minimum Size Limit: 20 inches

*Maximum Size Limit: 28 inches

Possession Limit - October 4 through December 31: 2 per person

* Two stripers per day with a minimum size of 20 inches and a maximum size of 28 inches, although one of those two fish may be greater than 28 inches.

Chesapeake Bay regulations for both the Spring and Fall seasons described above apply in the main stem of the Chesapeake Bay and Virginia's Chesapeake Bay tributary rivers, except for the tributary rivers emptying into the Potomac River (see note below for more information on Potomac River striper regulations).

Other Virginia restrictions: You may not combine possession limits when seasons overlap or you fish in multiple jurisdictions.

Gaffing striped bass or attempting to gaff striped bass is illegal in Virginia marine waters.

Federal water striped bass regulations: Atlantic Ocean waters beyond the 3 mile limit are closed to the taking and possession of striped bass all year.


Potomac River striped bass regulations: Different regulations apply in the Potomac River. These areas are subject to the rules and regulations of the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, P.O. Box 9, Colonial Beach, VA 22443, (804) 224-7148; (800) 266-3904; For further information on PRFC rules contact PRFC directly or visit [PRFC](#).

Capture Citation: 40 Lbs

Release Citation: 44 IN.

State Record: 74 lbs, 2012, Cary Wolfe


[STURGEON](#)



Code Section 28.2-303

Illegal to possess

[SUMMER FLOUNDER](#)



[Regulation 4 VAC 20-620-10 et seq.](#)

Minimum Size Limit: 16 1/2 IN.

Possession Limit: 4 per person

Season: Open year-round

Capture Citation: 6 Lbs

Release Citation: 26 IN.

State Record: 17 lbs 8 oz, 1971, Charles E. Cross

The above flounder restrictions apply to Virginia tidal waters, except that in Virginia's Potomac River tributaries the minimum size limit, closed season, and possession limit will be the same as established by the PRFC for the mainstem Potomac River.

SWORDFISH

Capture Citation: 100 Lbs

Release Citation: NO MIN

TAUTOG



[Regulation 4 VAC 20-960-10 et seq.](#)

Minimum Size Limit: 16 IN.

Possession Limit: 4 per person

Season: Closed Season: May 16 - June 30

Capture Citation: 9 Lbs

Release Citation: 23 IN.

State Record: 24 lbs 3 oz, 2012, Ken Neill, III

TILEFISH, BLUELINE



[Regulation 4 VAC 20-1120-10 et seq.](#)

Minimum Size Limit: None

Possession Limit: 7 Blueline Tilefish per person

Season: Season closes Oct 31, 2017

Capture Citation: 10 Lbs

Release Citation: NOT ELIGIBLE

State Record: 23 lbs 5 oz, 2009, Michael Akins

Any private recreational fishing vessel, charter boat or head boat, must obtain a Tilefish and Grouper Landing Permit, for that vessel, from the Marine Resources Commission in order to possess aboard, or land any tilefish or grouper, harvested recreationally. If the vessel is USCG or DGIF registered this no-cost permit can be obtained [online](#) or at a [MRC Licensing Agent](#).

TILEFISH, GOLDEN

[Regulation 4 VAC 20-1120-10 et seq.](#)

Minimum Size Limit: None

Possession Limit: 8 Golden Tilefish per person

Capture Citation: 30 LBS

Release Citation: NOT ELIGIBLE

State Record: 56 lbs 8 oz, 2008, Aaron Sledd

Any private recreational fishing vessel, charter boat or head boat, must obtain a Tilefish and Grouper Landing Permit, for that vessel, from the Marine Resources Commission in order to possess aboard, or land any tilefish or grouper, harvested recreationally. If the vessel is USCG or DGIF registered this no-cost permit can be obtained [online](#) or at a [MRC Licensing Agent](#).

TUNA (BLUEFIN)



Capture Citation: 100 Lbs




Release Citation: 60 IN.



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TUNA (YELLOWFIN, BIGEYE)

Capture Citation: 70 Lbs
Release Citation: NOT ELIGIBLE
Info: Managed by NMFS - <http://www.hmspermits.gov/>
State Record: Bigeye Tuna, 311 lbs, 2013, Vic Gaspeny
Yellowfin Tuna, 203 lbs 12 oz, 1981, Bruce C Gottwald, Jr.

WAHOO

Capture Citation: 35 Lbs
Release Citation: NOT ELIGIBLE
Info: Managed by SAFMC - <http://www.safmc.net/>
State Record: 122 lbs 1 oz, 2012, Susan Nelson