

...Printable Recreational Finfish Regulations

Although every attempt has been made to keep this copy of 322 CMR accurate and up to date, this is an “unofficial” copy. The official copy is maintained by the Secretary of State and may be purchased from the state bookstore. For more information on ordering a copy of 322 CMR go to <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/>

Recreational Finfish Regulations

Updated as of February 16, 2016

*Note: These regulations apply to state-waters only. Please click [here](#) for federal-waters recreational fishing regulations.

Species	Season	Size Limit	Possession Limit
American Eel (1)	January 01–December 31	9 in.	25 fish
Billfish and swordfish (2)	Federal rules apply. Consult NOAA Fisheries for bilfish and swordfish .		
Black Sea Bass (3)(9)	May 21–August 31	15 in.	5 fish
Bluefish	January 01–December 31	No Limit	10 fish
Cod (4)(5)(8) (North of Cape Cod  1MB)			
Private	January 01–December 31	19 in.	1 fish
For-Hire	Prohibited		
Cod (4)(5) (South of Cape Cod  1MB)	January 01–December 31	22 in.	10 fish
Dab (Plaice) (4)(5)	January 01–December 31	14 in.	No Limit
Fluke	May 22–September 23	16 in.	5 fish
Gray Sole (Witch) (4)(5)	January 01–December 31	14 in.	No Limit
Haddock (4)(5)(8) (North of Cape Cod  1MB)	January 01–December 31	17 in.	3 fish
Haddock (4)(5)(8) (South of Cape Cod  1MB)	January 01–December 31	18 in.	No Limit
Halibut (4)(5)	January 01–December 31	41 in.	1 fish
Monkfish (4)(5)	January 01–December 31	No Limit	No Limit
Ocean Pout (4)(5)	Prohibited		
Pollock (4)(5)	January 01–December 31	No Limit	No Limit
Redfish(4)(5)	January 01–December 31	No Limit	No Limit
River Herring	Prohibited		
Scup(9)			
Private	May 01–December 31	10 in.	30 fish or 150 fish/vessel if 5 or more anglers are aboard
For-Hire Bonus	May 1–June 30	10 in.	45 fish
For-Hire Regular	July 01–December 31	10 in.	30 fish
Shad			
Merrimack River	January 01–December 31	No Limit	3 fish
Connecticut River	January 01–December 31	No Limit	3 fish
Other Rivers	January 01–December 31	No Limit	Catch and Release Only
Sharks** (excludes spiny dogfish)	Refer to Shark Section. Full regulations at 322 CMR 6.37		
Smelt	June 16–March 14	No Limit	50 fish
Spiny Dogfish	January 01–December 31	No Limit	No Limit
Striped Bass (6)	January 01–December 31	28 in.	1 fish
Tautog	January 01–December 31	16 in.	3 fish
Tunas (Z)	Federal rules apply. Consult NOAA Fisheries		
Weakfish	January 01–December 31	16 in.	1 fish
White Perch	January 01–December 31	8 in.	25 fish
Windowpane (4)(5)	Prohibited		
Winter Flounder (4)(5) (North of Cape Cod  1MB)	All Year	12 in.	8 fish
Winter Flounder (4)(5) (South and East of Cape Cod  1MB)	March 01–December 31	12 in.	2 fish

Wolffish (4)(5)	Prohibited		
Yellowtail Flounder (4)(5)	January 01–December 31	13 in.	No Limit

Notes:

- 1) Subject to regulation by the Division and the municipality. Please consult municipal regulations.
- 2) All billfish species and swordfish are measured from the tip of the lower jaw to the tail fork. These species are managed by [NOAA's Highly Migratory Species Office](#). Please consult NOAA Fisheries for permitting requirements and regulations.
- 3) 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.
- 4) Federal rules apply beyond state waters. Consult [NOAA Fisheries](#) for permitting requirements and regulations.
- 5) It is unlawful to fish with hook and line gear in the [Winter Cod Conservation Closure](#) from November 15 through January 31. It is unlawful to take cod from the [Spring Cod Conservation Closure](#) from April 16 through July 21.
- 6) Striped bass are measured from the tip of the snout or jaw (mouth closed) to the farthest extremity of the tail. The discard of dead legal sized striped bass is unlawful. The practice of high-grading, whereby legal sized striped bass are released in favor of larger fish caught subsequently is unlawful. Accordingly, it is also unlawful to keep a striped bass alive in water by attaching a line or chain to the fish (stringer), or placing it in a live well or holding car. Striped bass must be kept whole, meaning the head, tail, and body remain intact. Only evisceration is allowed. Permitted for-hire vessels may fillet striped bass for their customers.
- 7) These species are managed by [NOAA's Highly Migratory Species Office](#). Please consult NOAA Fisheries for permitting requirements and regulations.
- 8) Cod and haddock rules subject to change in 2016.
- 9) Black sea bass and scup may be filleted but not skinned while at-sea. No more than two fillets per allowed fish may be possessed.