



ENHANCE \* PROTECT \* CONSERVE

Mississippi Department of Marine Resources  
1141 Bayview Ave., Biloxi, MS 39530  
228-374-5000  
[www.dmr.ms.gov](http://www.dmr.ms.gov)



DELBERT HOSEMAN  
*Secretary of State*

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Each year, the cover of "Guide to Mississippi Saltwater Fishing: Rules and Regulations" highlights a different Fisheries bureau within MDMR. The 2015-2016 cover represents the Artificial Reef Bureau.

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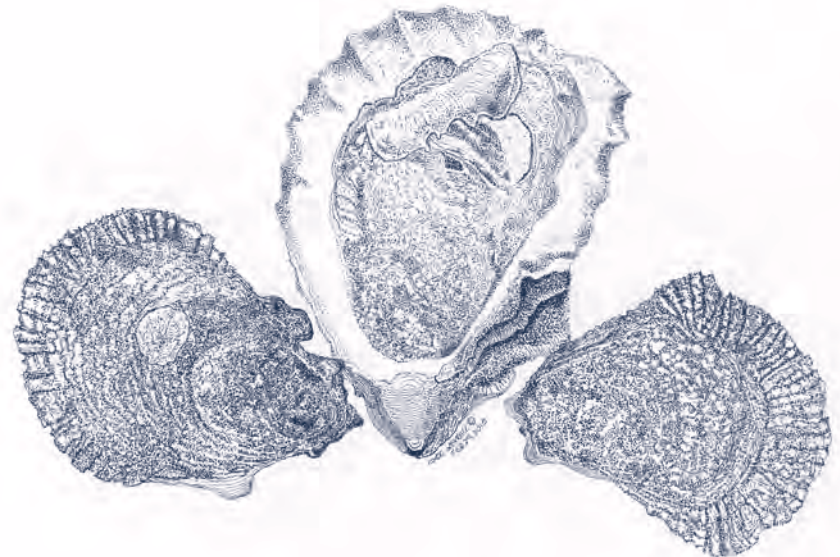
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# Guide to Mississippi Saltwater Fishing

## Rules and Regulations



## 2015-2016

Mississippi Department  
of Marine Resources



## Mississippi Department of Marine Resources



### State of Mississippi

The Honorable Phil Bryant, Governor

### Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources

Richard Gollott – Chairman  
Harrison County

Commercial Seafood Processor

Shelby Drummond – Vice Chairman  
Jackson County

Recreational Fisherman

Steve Bosarge  
Jackson County

Commercial Fisherman

Ernie Zimmerman  
Hancock County

Nonprofit Environmental  
Organization

Ron Harmon  
Harrison County

Charter Boat Operator

### Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

Jamie M. Miller, Executive Director

Printed July 2015

For more information, contact the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, 1141 Bayview Ave., Biloxi, MS 39530, 228-374-5000.

Visit our website: [dmr.ms.gov](http://dmr.ms.gov).

The information provided in this guide is an overview of regulations in effect as of July 1, 2015, concerning saltwater fishing in Mississippi's marine waters prepared in accordance with Mississippi Code Annotated §49-15-18. However, this guide is not, nor is it intended to be, a definitive publication of all regulations pertaining to saltwater fishing in Mississippi. Complete texts of all regulations and statutes are available at the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources' office and website. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this guide, readers are reminded that in the event of a conflict between state statute and CMR regulations, state statute will take precedence. If you are fishing in another state or in federal waters, please consult fishing regulations that would be applicable. Readers are further reminded that all regulations are subject to change.

**Federal regulations may differ from state regulations. For federal regulations, contact the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council at 888-833-1844 or [gulfcouncil.org](http://gulfcouncil.org).**

**The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council offers a free fishing regulations App for the Android and the iPhone.** The Apps provide immediate access to the most up-to-date commercial and recreational federal fishing regulations for species managed by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. Visit the App Store or Android Market to download the App or simply scan the appropriate QR code below with your iPhone or Droid.



## Coastal Resources...



## Yours to Treasure. Yours to Protect.

Your purchase of a fishing license supports research and restoration that enhances fishing opportunities in coastal Mississippi.

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## Fishing and Boat Licenses

### FISHING LICENSES

A Mississippi saltwater fishing license is required for anyone to harvest fish in coastal and marine waters (Miss Code Ann. Section 49-15-313) of this state except:

- Any person under the age of 16.
- Residents who have been declared by the Veterans Administration as having a total service-connected disability or have been declared totally disabled by the Social Security Administration. **Proof is required.**

**Residents 65 years of age or older are required to purchase a lifetime recreational saltwater fishing license for a one-time fee.**

A saltwater fishing license is required to fish south of Highway 90. Above Highway 90 and below Interstate 10, either a saltwater or freshwater license will suffice, and above I-10, a freshwater license is required.

### OTHER RECREATIONAL LICENSES

The above exemptions apply for recreational crab, shrimp and oyster licenses, but only to vessels registered in the exempt resident's name.

**Anyone exempt from these license requirements must have a valid driver's license and proof of service-connected or Social Security disability, if applicable, in his possession while fishing.**

Temporary residents stationed at a Mississippi military base can use a military I.D. to purchase a resident fishing license.

**Free fishing days** – Anyone may fish without a recreational saltwater fishing license in state marine waters, which are waters south of I-10, on **the first weekend of National Fishing and Boating Week in June and on July 4.**

**Saltwater sportfishing, recreational shrimping and recreational crabbing licenses expire one (1) year after date of sale.**

All commercial boats, whether resident or nonresident, fishing for shrimp, oysters, crabs or finfish (with gill net, trammel net or similar approved nets) within the territorial waters of the State of Mississippi are required to be licensed as described herein.

**All commercial seafood licenses expire April 30 of each year.**

### BOAT LICENSES

Proof of residence must be shown, along with valid boat registration/documentation before any license can be purchased. Proof can be a valid driver's license, homestead exemption, voter's registration card or a Mississippi state tax return.

## License Fees

<u>TYPE OF LICENSE</u>	<u>RESIDENT LICENSE FEES</u>
<b>SHRIMP</b>	
Recreational	\$15
Shrimp/Captain Under 30' Boat	\$60
Shrimp/Captain 30' to 45' Boat	\$85
Shrimp/Captain Over 45' Boat	\$110
Mississippi Captain's License	\$10
<b>CRAB</b>	
Commercial Crab Trawl	\$75
Commercial Crab Trap	\$75
Recreational Crab Trap	\$5
<b>FISH</b>	
Recreational Saltwater Fishing License*	\$12.29**
Fishing Boat License/Gill & Trammel Net	\$100
Charter Boat	\$200
Commercial Hook and Line/Gig per Vessel	\$100
Commercial Hook and Line/Gig per Fisherman	\$100
Menhaden Boat/Net	\$150
Lifetime License (for 65 and older)***	\$7.29
<b>OYSTER</b>	
Recreational	\$10
Commercial Tonging****	\$60
Commercial Dredging****	\$110
<b>LIVE BAIT</b>	
Live-bait Shrimp Dealer	\$50
Live-bait Shrimp Boat	\$100
Saltwater Minnow*****	\$50
<b>BUSINESS LICENSE</b>	
Interstate Commerce	\$20
Seafood Dealer/Processor*****	\$100
Menhaden Processor	\$500
Seafood Transport License	\$100
Fresh Product Permit	No Charge

\*Valid for recreational methods of taking finfish south of U.S. Interstate 10.

\*\*License fee of \$10 plus \$2.29 processing and agent fees.

\*\*\*Residents 65 years of age or older are required to purchase a lifetime recreational saltwater fishing license for a small one-time fee of \$5 plus \$2.29 processing and agent fees.

\*\*\*\*A valid MS Shellfish Education Course certificate must be presented by the business representative at time of license purchase.

\*\*\*\*\*In order to catch or transport saltwater minnows for sale, fishermen must obtain a saltwater minnow license (see p. 13).

\*\*\*\*\*A valid MS Oyster Harvester Education certificate must be presented by the boat owner at time of license purchase.

**Each seafood dealer/processor is required to complete Mississippi trip tickets provided by the MDMR. Commercial fishermen who land and sell their catch to anyone except a licensed Mississippi dealer/processor are required to complete trip tickets and be in possession of a fresh product permit.**

License fees for nonresidents may vary. Call the MDMR at 228-374-5000 for current license fees if you are a nonresident.

## Recreational Fishing Limits\*

*\*Bag/Possession are per person unless stated otherwise.*

	Minimum Length in Inches	Number of Fish Bag/Possession
COBIA	33 FL	2
FLOUNDER	12 TL	15
RED DRUM♦	18 TL to 30 TL**	3
SPOTTED SEATROUT	13 TL	15
KING MACKEREL♦♦♦	24 FL	2
SPANISH MACKEREL♦♦♦	No Limit	15
TRIPLETAIL	18 TL	3
VERMILLION SNAPPER♦♦♦	10 TL	20 (in aggregate)
LANE SNAPPER♦♦♦	8 TL	
GRAY TRIGGERFISH♦♦♦	14 FL	
ALMACO JACK♦♦♦	No Limit	
GOLDFACE TILEFISH♦♦♦	No Limit	
ANCHOR TILEFISH♦♦♦	No Limit	
TILEFISH♦♦♦	No Limit	
BLACKLINE TILEFISH♦♦♦	No Limit	
BLUELINE TILEFISH♦♦♦	No Limit	No Take No Take
GOLIATH GROUPER♦♦♦	No Take	
NASSAU GROUPER♦♦♦	No Take	1 per vessel***
WARSAW GROUPER♦♦♦	No Limit	
RED & YELLOWFIN GROUPERS♦♦♦	20 TL	4 (in aggregate)
BLACK GROUPER♦♦♦	24 TL	
GAG♦♦♦	22 TL****	
SCAMP♦♦♦	16 TL	1 per vessel***
SPECKLED HIND♦♦♦	No Limit	
RED SNAPPER♦♦♦	16 TL	2
GRAY, SCHOOLMASTER, CUBERA, DOG, MAHOGANY & YELLOWTAIL SNAPPERS♦♦♦	12 TL	10 (in aggregate)
MUTTON SNAPPER♦♦♦	16 TL	
QUEEN, BLACKFIN, SILK & WENCHMAN SNAPPERS♦♦♦	No Limit	

**\*It is illegal to sell any seafood taken with a recreational license.**

**\*\*Range represents minimum and maximum lengths.**

**\*\*\*Recreational fishermen may possess one (1) per vessel within four-fish aggregate.**

**\*\*\*\*Recreational fishermen may possess two (2) within four-fish aggregate.**

**♦Recreational fishermen may retain only one red drum over 30 inches.**

**♦♦♦For openings and closings of federally regulated fish go to [www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org).**

**TL = TOTAL LENGTH** - Straight line distance from tip of snout to tip of tail.

**FL = FORK LENGTH** - Straight line distance from tip of snout to fork of tail.

**CFL = CURVED FORK LENGTH** - Tip of the upper jaw to the fork of tail measured along the contour of the middle of the body.

**Note: Fishing seasons for some species may be closed by order of the Commission on Marine Resources. Advance notice of such closures shall be given. Species caught out of their natural habitat may have size, creel and seasonal limits.**

## Recreational Fishing Limits\*

*\*Bag/Possession are per person unless stated otherwise.*

	Minimum Length in Inches	Number of Fish Bag/Possession
YELLOWMOUTH, YELLOWEDGE, MISTY & SNOWY GROUPERS	No Limit	4 (in aggregate)**
ROCK & RED HIND GROUPERS	No Limit	4 (in aggregate)**
GREATER AMBERJACK♦♦♦	30 FL	1
LESSER AMBERJACK & BANDED RUDDERFISH♦♦♦	14 FL to 22 FL**	5 (in aggregate)
HOGFISH♦♦♦	12 FL	5
BIG EYE TUNA♦♦♦	27 CFL	No Limit
YELLOWFIN TUNA♦♦♦	27 CFL	3
BLUE MARLIN♦♦♦	99 lower jaw FL	No Limit
WHITE MARLIN♦♦♦	66 lower jaw FL	No Limit
SAILFISH♦♦♦	63 lower jaw FL	No Limit
Longbill spearfish♦♦♦	No Take	No Take
SHARKS (LARGE COASTALS & PELAGICS)♦♦/♦♦♦	37 TL	1 per person/ up to 3 per vessel
SHARKS (SMALL COASTALS)♦♦/♦♦♦	25 TL	4
CRABS - HARD SHELLS	5***	No Limit
CRABS - SOFT SHELL	No Limit	No Limit

**\*It is illegal to sell any seafood taken with a recreational license.**

**\*\*Range** represents minimum and maximum lengths.

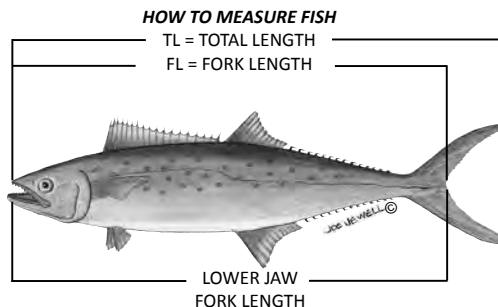
**\*\*\*As measured** from the tip of one lateral spine across the back of the shell to the tip of the opposite lateral spine.

**\*\*\*\*Recreational fishermen** may possess two (2) within four-fish aggregate.

**♦♦Possession** of certain coastal sharks is prohibited. See p. 8 and federal regulations for more information.

**♦♦♦For openings and closings** of federally regulated fish go to [www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org).

**Bluefin tuna limits** are variable throughout the season and depend on the size category. Refer to [www.nmfspermits.com](http://www.nmfspermits.com) or call 888-872-8862 for updated information. All bluefin catches must be reported to the MDMR Office of Marine Fisheries, 1141 Bayview Ave., Biloxi, MS 39530, or call 228-374-5000.



Federal regulations may differ from state regulations. For federal regulations, contact the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council at 888-833-1844 or [www.gulfcouncil.org](http://www.gulfcouncil.org).

## Commercial Fishing Limits

	Minimum Length in Inches	Number of Fish Bag/Possession
COBIA*	33 FL	2
MULLET	10 TL	No Limit
FLOUNDER	12 TL	Quota***
RED DRUM**	18 TL to 30 TL*	Quota***
SPOTTED SEATROUT	14 TL	Quota***
KING MACKEREL	24 FL	3,000 lbs
SPANISH MACKEREL	14 FL	No Limit
GOLIATH GROUPE	No Take	No Take
NASSAU GROUPE	No Take	No Take
RED GROUPE	18 TL	
YELLOWFIN GROUPE	20 TL	No Limit
GAG GROUPE	22 TL	
BLACK GROUPE	24 TL	No Limit
SCAMP	16 TL	No Limit
TRIPLETAIL	18 TL	3
RED SNAPPER	13 TL**	IFQ**
VERMILLION SNAPPER	10 TL	No Limit
LANE SNAPPER	8 TL	No Limit
GRAY TRIGGERFISH	14 FL	No Limit
GRAY, SCHOOLMASTER, CUBERA, DOG, MAHOGANY & YELLOWTAIL SNAPPERS	12 TL	No Limit
MUTTON SNAPPER	16 TL	No Limit
GREATER AMBERJACK	36 FL	No Limit
LESSER AMBERJACK & BANDED RUDDERFISH	14 FL to 22 FL*	No Limit
HOGFISH	12 FL	No Limit
BIGEYE TUNA	27 CFL	No Limit
BLUEFIN TUNA	No Take	No Take
YELLOWFIN TUNA	27 CFL	No Limit
BLUE MARLIN	No Take	No Take
WHITE MARLIN	No Take	No Take
SAILFISH	No Take	No Take
Longbill spearfish	No Take	No Take
CRABS - HARD SHELLS	5****	No Limit
CRABS - SOFT SHELL	No Limit	No Limit

\*It is illegal to sell cobia caught in Mississippi territorial waters or cobia landed in Mississippi.

\*\*Commercial fishermen may retain only one red drum over 30 inches.

\*Range represents minimum and maximum lengths.

\*\*It is illegal to sell, barter or trade any species of reef fish without possessing the proper federal permits and/or licenses required by the NOAA Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Fishery Management Plan and complying with any other conditions set forth by federal or state regulations for the management of the identified reef fish. IFQ = Individual Fishing Quota.

\*\*\*The season for flounder and red drum will run from Jan. 1 through Dec. 31 each year. The season for spotted sea-trout will run from Feb. 1 through Sept. 30 each year. Total allowable catch (TAC) limits are 74,000 pounds for flounder, 50,000 pounds for red drum and 50,000 pounds for spotted seatrout. The commercial TAC for spotted seatrout is 50,000 pounds, which is divided into two fishing periods. For more information on the commercial spotted seatrout season, see page 15. When landing reports, as required by law, show the TAC has been reached for a given species, MDMR will, with adequate notice, issue a news release and public notice closing state waters to commercial fishing for that species for the remainder of that fishing year.

**Federal regulations may differ from state regulations. For federal regulations, contact the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council at 888-833-1844 or [gulfcouncil.org](http://gulfcouncil.org).**

\*\*\*\*As measured from tip of one lateral spine across the back of the shell to tip of opposite lateral spine.



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## Catch and Release

### WHY RELEASE FISH?

1. A fish is too valuable a resource to be caught only once.
2. A personal commitment to conservation adds fun to fishing.
3. Size, season and bag regulations make release of some fish mandatory.

### HOW TO BEGIN

1. Use barbless or circle hooks that are made from metals that rust quickly.
2. Set your hook immediately. Try to prevent a fish from swallowing the bait.
3. Work a fish out of deep water slowly, so it can adjust to the pressure change.
4. Otherwise, land your quarry quickly; don't play it to exhaustion.

### HANDLING YOUR CATCH

1. Leave the fish in the water (if possible) and don't handle it.
2. Net your catch only if you cannot control it any other way.
3. When you must handle a fish: Use a wet glove or rag to hold it; turn a fish on its back or cover its eyes with a wet towel to calm it; don't put your fingers in the eyes or gills of your catch. Larger fish may be kept in the water by holding the leader with a glove or by slipping a release gaff through the lower jaw. Avoid removing mucus or scales.

### REMOVING THE HOOK

1. If possible, back the hook out the opposite way it went in.
2. Cut the leader close to the mouth if a fish has been hooked deeply or if the hook can't be removed quickly.
3. Use needle-nose pliers, a hemostat or a hookout to remove the hook and protect your hands.
4. For a larger fish in the water, slip a gaff around the leader and slide it down to the hook. Lift the gaff upward while pulling downward on the leader.
5. Do not jerk or pop a leader to break it. This could kill the fish.

### THE RELEASE

1. Gently place the fish in the water, supporting its midsection and tail.
2. Resuscitate an exhausted fish by moving it back and forth or tow it alongside the boat to force water through its gills.
3. For fish pulled up from deep water, air bladder deflation is achieved by inserting an approved venting tool through the side of the fish immediately behind the upper part of the pectoral fin base (see diagram p. 14). The deflation position varies among species. However, penetration at a point below the 4th or 5th dorsal fin spine is generally appropriate.
4. Watch the fish to make sure it swims away.
5. If it doesn't, recover the fish and try again.

*Note: Fishing seasons for some species may be closed by order of the Commission on Marine Resources. Advance notice of such closures shall be given.*

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## Sharks

The numerous shark species are divided into three management groups:

### I. LARGE COASTAL SHARKS

sandbar**	<i>Carcharhinus plumbeus</i>
blacktip	<i>Carcharhinus limbatus</i>
dusky*	<i>Carcharhinus obscurus</i>
spinner	<i>Carcharhinus brevipinna</i>
silky*	<i>Carcharhinus falciformis</i>
bull	<i>Carcharhinus leucas</i>
bignose*	<i>Carcharhinus altimus</i>
narrowtooth*	<i>Carcharhinus brachyurus</i>
Galapagos*	<i>Carcharhinus galapagensis</i>
night*	<i>Carcharhinus signatus</i>
Caribbean reef*	<i>Carcharhinus perezi</i>
tiger	<i>Galeocerdo cuvier</i>
lemon	<i>Negaprion brevirostris</i>
sand tiger*	<i>Odontaspis taurus</i>
bigeye sand tiger*	<i>Odontaspis noronhai</i>
nurse	<i>Ginglymostoma cirratum</i>
scalloped hammerhead	<i>Sphyrna lewini</i>
great hammerhead	<i>Sphyrna mokarran</i>
smooth hammerhead	<i>Sphyrna zygaena</i>
whale*	<i>Rhincodon typus</i>
basking*	<i>Cetorhinus maximus</i>
white*	<i>Carcharodon carcharias</i>

### II. SMALL COASTAL SHARKS

Atlantic sharpnose	<i>Rhizoprionodon terraenovae</i>
Caribbean sharpnose*	<i>Rhizoprionodon porosus</i>
finetooth	<i>Carcharhinus isodon</i>
blacknose	<i>Carcharhinus acronotus</i>
smalltail*	<i>Carcharhinus porosus</i>
bonnethead	<i>Sphyrna tiburo</i>
Atlantic angel*	<i>Squatina dumeril</i>

\*Possession of these species is prohibited by state regulation and federal law.

\*\*Sandbar sharks may only be possessed by fishermen possessing a research fishery permit issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service.

### III. PELAGIC SHARKS

shortfin mako	<i>Isurus oxyrinchus</i>
longfin mako*	<i>Isurus paucus</i>
porbeagle	<i>Lamna nasus</i>
thresher	<i>Alopias vulpinus</i>
bigeye thresher*	<i>Alopias superciliosus</i>
blue	<i>Prionace glauca</i>
oceanic whitetip	<i>Carcharhinus longimanus</i>
sevengill*	<i>Heptanchias perlo</i>
sixgill*	<i>Hexanchus griseus</i>
bigeye sixgill*	<i>Hexanchus vitulus</i>

\*Possession of these species is prohibited.

### RECREATIONAL SHARK LIMITS

Recreational fishermen may possess no more than one of the large coastal and pelagic shark species per person and no more than three of the large coastal and pelagic shark species per vessel in state waters.

The minimum size limit for large coastal sharks is 37 inches total length in state waters.

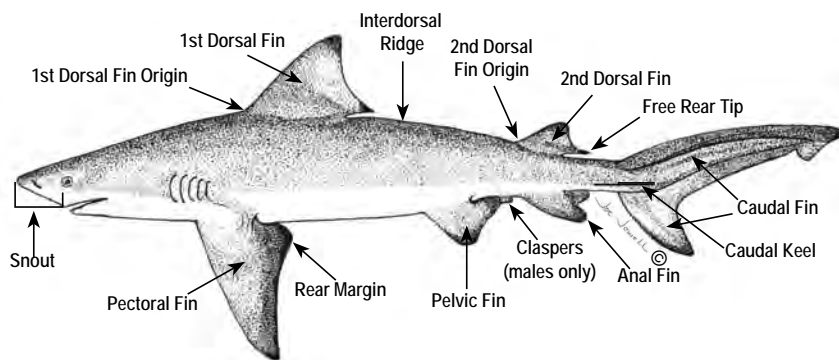
Of the small coastal shark species group, recreational fishermen may possess four sharks per person per day in state waters.

The minimum size limit for small coastal sharks is 25 inches total length in state waters.

### COMMERCIAL SHARK LIMITS

All shark species are under federal quotas.

The practice of finning, which is removing only the fins and returning the remainder of the shark to the sea, is illegal.

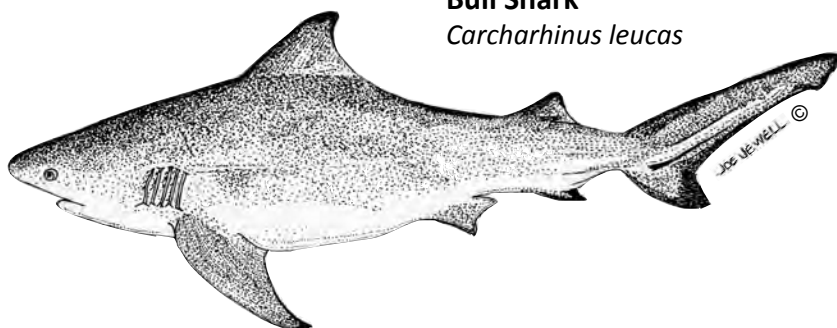


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## Common Sharks in Mississippi Waters

### Bull Shark

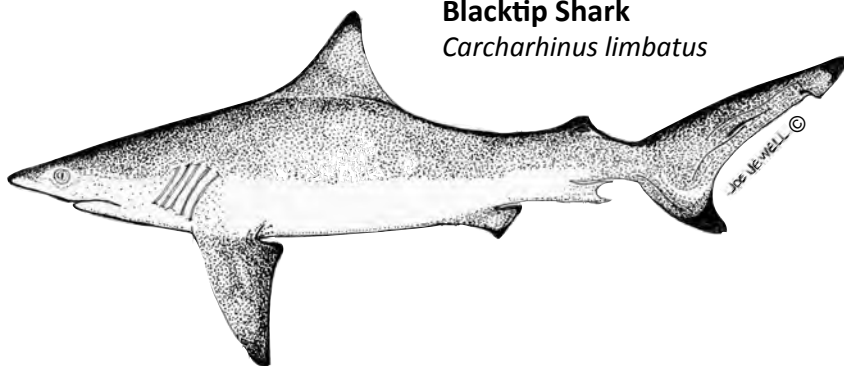
*Carcharhinus leucas*



One of the largest sharks commonly found in inshore waters, it can reach lengths of greater than 10 feet. One of the few sharks that regularly move into fresh water. The most distinguishing characteristic of this shark is its large robust body. This shark is also characterized by a short snout that is blunt and rounded.

### Blacktip Shark

*Carcharhinus limbatus*



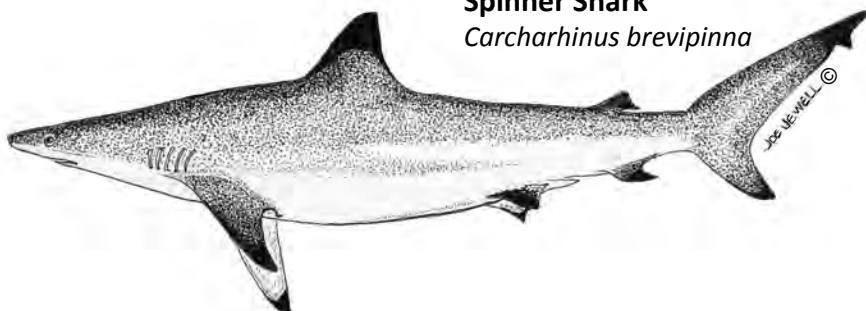
As the name indicates, this shark's fins are tipped in black **except** for the anal fin. It is a medium-size shark, but can reach lengths of 9 feet. This shark is very active when hooked and will jump out of the water.

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## Common Sharks in Mississippi Waters

### Spinner Shark

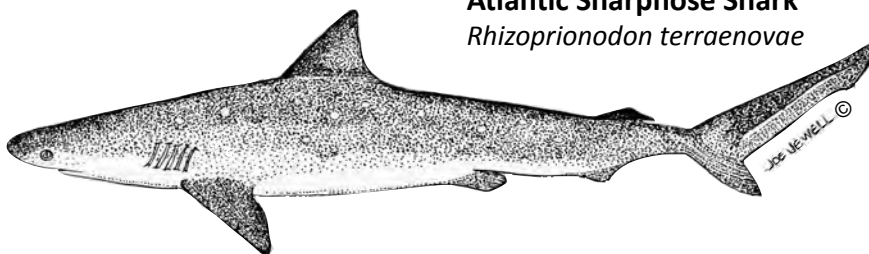
*Carcharhinus brevipinna*



The spinner shark gets its name from a behavior where it leaps out of the water and spins in midair. It is very similar to the blacktip shark, but all its fins are black-tipped, including the anal fin. It can reach lengths up to 9 feet and is extremely active when hooked.

### Atlantic Sharpnose Shark

*Rhizoprionodon terraenovae*



The most common shark in Mississippi coastal waters, this shark rarely exceeds 4 feet in length. It is characterized by a slender build and white blotches on the body. The origin of the second dorsal fin is about mid-base of the anal fin. These sharks are also called “wormies” by coastal fishermen.

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# Saltwater Finfish

## METHODS OF TAKING

A Recreational Fishing license is required for all methods of finfish harvest.

Saltwater finfish may be taken from Mississippi waters by any of the following methods:

- Hook and line: Cane pole, handline or rod and reel.
- Trotline: Anyone trotline fishing south of Interstate 10 must be registered with MDMR and be issued a unique number that is to be attached, along with fisherman's name, to both ends of trotline on metal tags, written in indelible ink so that it is readable by MDMR personnel.
- Spear or gig.
- Cast nets and brill (brail) nets: Not to exceed 12 feet in radius, may be used in marine waters only. No freshwater species may be in a fisherman's possession while he is using a cast net or brill net.
- Small-mesh beach seines under 100 feet in length and with a maximum 1/4-inch-square mesh size.
- Trammel or gill nets, seines or any similar contrivance must be under 1,200 feet in total length. Gill and trammel nets must have a minimum 1-1/2-inch-square mesh size. From Oct. 15 through Dec. 15 of each year, gill and trammel nets must have a minimum square-inch mesh size of 1-3/4 inches. Gill and trammel nets must be made of MDMR-approved degradable materials.
- Permitted eel traps must have a minimum of 1/2- by 1-inch-square mesh size.

## SPECIAL PROVISIONS

Commercial fishing is prohibited north of the CSX Railroad bridge in the three coastal counties of Mississippi.

In addition, the National Park Service prohibits commercial fishing within the Gulf Islands National Seashore boundary, which is a one-mile perimeter around Ship, Horn and Petit Bois islands.

Any person or company selling or transporting for sale any species of fish that does not meet Mississippi state size limits or for which the season is closed must possess valid documentation from the state or country of origin evidencing that the fish were legally harvested.

**Commercial eel permit:** A special permit and regulations for commercial eel fishing must be obtained from the MDMR.

All fish traps or pots and eel traps or pots must be clearly marked with the owner's full name, permit or license number. All fish traps or pots and eel traps or pots must be checked and emptied at least once every 48 hours.

It shall be unlawful for commercial or recreational fishermen to possess fish with heads, tails or flesh removed until delivered to final destination; however, fish may be scaled or have gills removed. (see pg. 19 for charter boats)

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**Saltwater minnow license:** In order to catch or transport saltwater minnows for sale, fishermen must obtain a saltwater minnow license (see license fees pg. 3).

All minnow traps placed in or on the marine waters of Mississippi must have a corrosion-resistant metal or plastic tag permanently attached to the trap and stamped with the licensed owner's full name. The minimum height of the letters shall be at least 3/16 of an inch.

**The possession of a gill net, trammel net or like contrivance,** or any other equipment prohibited for use in the taking or harvesting of seafood on a vessel on the marine waters of this state where the use of the net, contrivance or equipment is prohibited, shall constitute *prima facie* evidence that an offense has been committed to take or harvest seafood with nets, contrivances or equipment prohibited by this chapter, unless the vessel is:

- (a) Anchored or moored at a permanent facility intended for the mooring of vessels;
- (b) Traveling directly between a marina, harbor or public boat launching facility and a U.S. Coast Guard marked and maintained navigation channel; OR
- (c) Traveling within a U.S. Coast Guard marked and maintained navigation channel.

The use of gill or trammel nets is prohibited within 1/2 mile of the shoreline. All nets, regardless of type, must be clearly marked with the owner's name or license number. Floats or buoys must be placed at intervals of 100 feet or less.

**Nets, seines or any like contrivance are not permitted in the following areas:**

Within any river, bayou, creek, canal, stream, tributary, lake, bay, inlet or other water source entering into salt waters, except:

- Point Aux Chenes Bay.
- Middle Bay - Jose Bay.
- L'Isle Chaude Bay.
- Heron Bay.
- South Rigolets.
- Biloxi Bay, south of a line between Marsh Point, Ocean Springs and Grand Bayou, Deer Island.
- Pascagoula Bay, south of a line beginning at a point on the shoreline at the southern terminus of range lines R7W and R6W near Camp Lamotte; thence southeasterly along the most direct line to the southernmost point of Twin Islands; thence easterly along the most direct line to the southern point of Rabbit Island; thence easterly along the most direct line to beacon "Occ R 4 sec 100 feet" on the eastern side of Northrop Grumman Ship Systems; thence southeasterly following the shoreline of the southeasternmost point

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of Northrop Grumman Ship Systems; thence easterly along the most direct line to the southernmost point of land adjoining the entrance of Yazoo Lake and South Rigolets and Biloxi Bay south of a line drawn between Marsh Point and Grand Bayou.

Nets, seines or fish traps used for catching fish are not permitted within 1,200 feet of any pier or harbor. Nets, seines or fish traps are not permitted within 100 feet of the mouth of any bay, bayou, creek, canal, stream, lake, inlet, channel or tributary or within any area that would block the mouth of any such body of water. **(Please note: gill and trammel nets are prohibited within 1/2 mile of the shoreline.)**

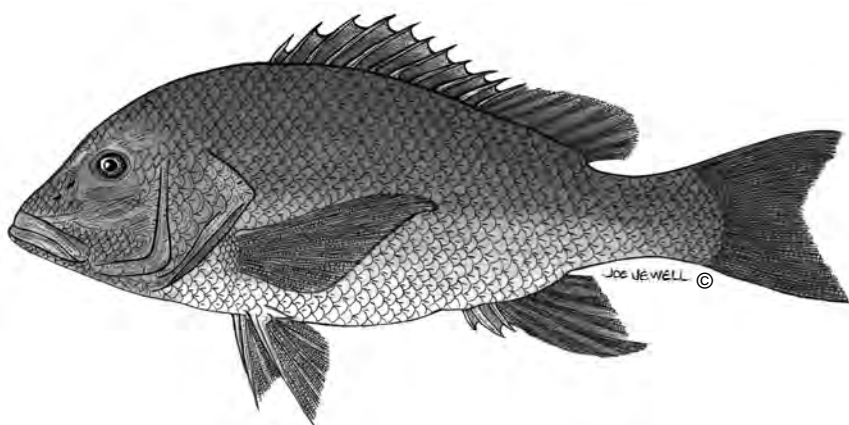
Purse seines may not exceed 1,500 feet in length, except those used expressly to catch menhaden. Menhaden purse seines must have a mesh size no smaller than 1/2-inch square (1-inch stretch).

### **REEF FISH REGULATIONS**

All fishermen fishing for reef-associated species (snappers, groupers, triggerfish and amberjack) must possess and utilize the tools described below:

**Dehooking tool:** The hook removal device is required to be constructed to allow the hook to be secured and the barb shielded without re-engaging during the removal process. This requires the dehooking end to be blunt, and all edges rounded. The device must be of a size appropriate to secure the range of hook sizes and styles used in the reef-fish fishery.

**Hooks:** NON-stainless steel circle hooks are required when using natural baits while fishing for all reef species including red snapper.





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## CATCH RESTRICTIONS

King mackerel fishing is defined as a fishing activity in which the sole purpose is to catch king mackerel. Catching in excess of 10 percent by weight of species other than king mackerel while net fishing for king mackerel is prohibited.

Mullet fishing is defined as any net-fishing activity in which 90 percent or more of the total catch by weight consists of mullet. Mullet fishing using traps, seines or nets other than cast or Brill nets is not permitted within 1,200 feet of any public or hotel pier nor within 300 feet of any private pier, provided that such piers are in usable condition and extend 75 feet or more from the shoreline. Nets must not exceed 1,200 feet in length.

The commercial season will run from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31 each year. Total allowable catch (TAC) limits for the 2015 season and each following will be 74,000 pounds for flounder, 50,000 pounds for red drum and 50,000 for spotted seatrout. When landing reports, as required by law, show the TAC has been reached for a given species, MDMR will, with adequate notice, issue a news release and public notice closing state waters to commercial fishing for that species for the remainder of that fishing year.

If the first half of the commercial TAC is not met in the first time period (Feb. 1 - May 31) the extra poundage shall be added to the second time period (June 1 - Sept. 30). If however the 25,000-pound TAC is exceeded, the overage shall be subtracted from the second time period (June 1 - Sept. 30).

Purse seines may not be used to catch in excess of 5 percent by weight in any single set of the net, any of the following fishes:

- Bluefish
- Cobia (ling or lemonfish)
- Dolphin
- Jack crevalle
- King mackerel
- Pompano
- Spanish mackerel
- Spotted seatrout (speckled trout)

It also is illegal for any vessel carrying a purse seine to have on board in excess of 10 percent by weight of the total catch any of the aforementioned species.

It is further illegal for any vessel carrying a purse seine to have on board any quantity of red drum (redfish).

Commercial fishermen may retain two cobia per person for personal consumption.

It is illegal to sell cobia caught in Mississippi territorial waters or landed in Mississippi.

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## Common Finfish in Mississippi Waters

### Red Snapper

*Lutjanus campechanus*



Abounding around the offshore artificial reefs and other bottom obstructions, the red snapper is a coveted foodfish along the Gulf Coast. These brilliantly colored fish are distinguished by their red coloration and reef-dwelling habits. Snapper are typically caught on heavy tackle, using cut fish for bait. Please be aware, juveniles will have a dark spot below the dorsal fin.

### Mullet

*Mugil cephalus*



Both striped and white mullet are called "Biloxi Bacon" along the Mississippi Gulf Coast as this species is a staple for subsistence fishermen and a principal prey species for larger fish. Mullet are most commonly taken using cast nets. Hook-and-line fishermen can catch these fish with very small hooks and doughball baits.

### Lane Snapper

*Lutjanus synagris*



The color pattern of this snapper makes it easy to distinguish from the other snappers that occur along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. They are a red color with 8 to 10 yellow/gold horizontal stripes along the sides and a black spot beneath the dorsal fin. This species is less abundant than either the red or vermillion snappers.

### Red Drum

*Sciaenops ocellatus*



Redfish are another favorite species of local anglers. These bruisers can get upwards of 30 pounds. Feeding habits are intermediate between their cousins, the bottom-feeding black drum and the more surface-feeding spotted seatrout. Blue crabs and gold spoons are among the best bait to use for catching redfish.

### Gray Snapper (Mangrove)

*Lutjanus griseus*



This small snapper is commonly found inshore congregating around seagrass beds, rocky areas and piers. This species is often found in mixed schools with pinfish and pigfish. As they grow larger they move offshore over hard bottoms and can be caught around artificial reefs.

### Vermillion Snapper (Beeliner)

*Rhomboplites aurorubens*



This snapper is bright red in color and its body shape is narrower than that of the red snapper. Vermillion snapper are small snapper which are found in the same habitat as red snapper and caught on the same type of baits.

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## Common Finfish in Mississippi Waters

### King Mackerel

*Scomberomorus cavalla*



Kings are constantly on the move and migrate along the entire northern Gulf of Mexico, where they may congregate around oil rigs, offshore wrecks and shoalwater. King mackerel in excess of 60 pounds are taken each year by fishermen who troll and cast for them as far south as the mouth of the Mississippi River.

### Gag

*Mycteroperca microlepis*



During the summer months when the water temperatures increase along the coast, juvenile gag are often caught by fishermen around rock piles and pilings. The larger adults occur offshore in deeper water, usually over hard bottoms and around some kind of structure.

### Spanish Mackerel

*Scomberomorus maculatus*



Spanish mackerel are abundant in the Mississippi Sound from early summer through midfall. Caught best on fast-moving, silvery lures, they form the summer staple of the charter fishery. Care should be taken when removing these toothsome critters from the hook.

### Spotted Seatrout

*Cynoscion nebulosus*



Locally called speckled trout or simply "speck," this fish is widely sought in coastal waters Gulfwide. Specks upwards of 5 pounds are not uncommon, but the average school trout will be around a pound or so. Trout can be caught year-round, but spring and fall are peak fishing times.

### Cobia

*Rachycentron canadum*



Called lemonfish locally, the cobia is truly a big-game species. Lemonfish up to 100 pounds are caught annually during the spring run. Lemonfish have a decided preference for congregating around buoys, anchored vessels, etc. Live catfish or white trout are preferred bait, though a jig or feather might also entice a big lemon into striking.

### Greater Amberjack

*Seriola dumerili*



This fish is generally found around deep water oil rigs or artificial reefs. Greater amberjack can reach weights in excess of 100 pounds and can put up an excellent fight when hooked. The greater amberjack is the largest of the four amberjack species that occur in the Gulf of Mexico.

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## Recreational Fishing

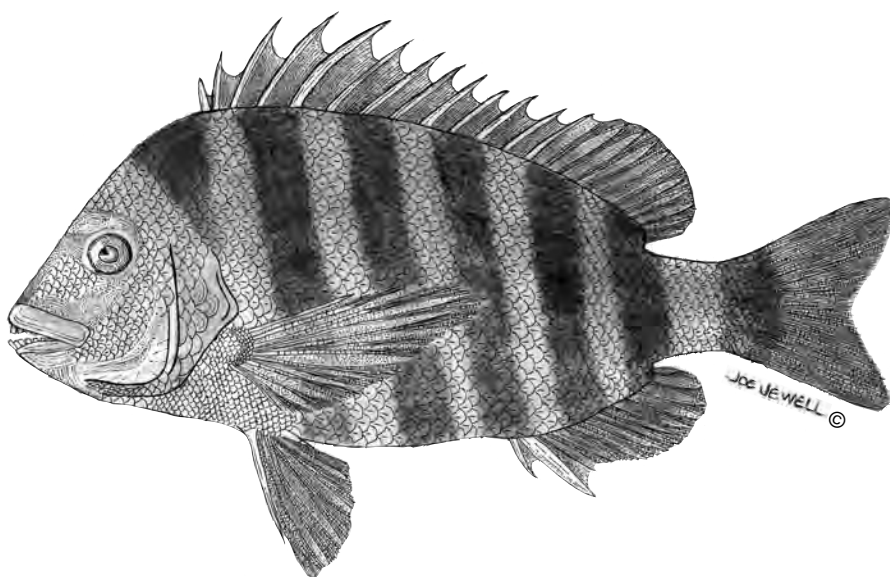
### SPECIAL PROVISIONS

Please see the “Fishing Licenses” section (pp. 2-3) in the front of this booklet for more information on Mississippi recreational saltwater sportfishing licenses and Mississippi’s free saltwater sportfishing days. A recreational saltwater fishing license is required for all methods of recreational finfish harvest.

It shall be unlawful for recreational fishermen to sell or offer for sale any seafood caught in or landed in the State of Mississippi, and only licensed commercial fishermen may catch and sell seafood. Furthermore, it shall be unlawful for any person, firm or corporation to purchase, buy, barter for or trade for any seafood caught in or landed in the State of Mississippi that was caught or landed by a recreational fisherman or that was transported into the State of Mississippi by a recreational fisherman.

It is lawful for any restaurant to possess, prepare and serve lawfully recreationally caught marine finfish to the persons who caught the finfish (Senate Bill 2068).

Recreational fishermen not fishing in Mississippi waters may transport and land fish that meet the minimum size and creel limits of the waters in which they were legally caught. Said recreational fishermen must possess a valid salt-water sportfishing license as may be required in the waters where the fish were caught. In the absence of minimum size or creel limits in another jurisdiction, Mississippi law will prevail.



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## CHARTER AND HEAD BOATS

Persons on a licensed charter boat or head boat may possess a two-day bag limit only when complying with the following conditions and only for the species listed in subsection H as listed below:

- A. Charter boats must be less than 100 gross tons and meet U.S. Coast Guard requirements to carry six or fewer passengers.
- B. Head boats must hold a valid certificate of inspection issued by the Coast Guard.
- C. The charter boat or head boat must possess a federal reef fish permit if fishing for reef fish or in possession of reef fish in federal waters.
- D. The charter boat or head boat must have two Coast Guard-certified captains aboard (as required by Coast Guard regulations for trips over 12 hours).
- E. Each person aboard the charter boat or head boat must possess a certificate issued in the name of the chartering company, stating the time and date the charter left the dock, and the trip must be in excess of 24 hours.
- F. Charter vessel captain and crew are prohibited from keeping a recreational bag limit of red snapper.
- G. For-hire vessel captains and crew are prohibited from retaining a recreational bag limit of greater amberjack.
- H. King and Spanish mackerel, snappers (red, vermillion, lane, gray, mutton, yellowtail, schoolmaster, cubera, dog, mahogany, queen, blackfin, silk and wenchman), groupers (misty, snowy, yellowedge, warsaw, speckled hind, red, yellowfin, black, gag, scamp, yellowmouth, rock hind and red hind), hogfish, gray triggerfish, lesser amberjack, banded rudderfish, almaco jack, goldface tilefish, anchor tilefish, blackline tilefish, blueline tilefish and greater amberjack.

Charter and recreational fishermen fishing in the Gulf of Mexico over 24 continuous hours may possess filleted fish in Mississippi waters, if they have filed a float plan with the MDMR in advance and have a signed copy aboard their boats. Float plans are available at the MDMR during regular working hours, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Float plans must be filed and received during these times, before the boat's departure on the fishing trip. A float plan does not allow anglers to possess a two-day catch.

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## Mississippi Sportfishing Records

To qualify for saltwater sportfishing record consideration, anglers must complete an official application obtained from the MDMR and must abide by the following rules:

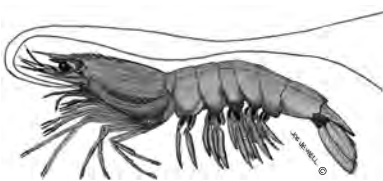
1. Fish must be hooked, fought and brought to net or gaff by the applicant with no help from any person, except that another person may operate the net or gaff. Catches on handlines or other nonsporting equipment will not be considered.
2.
  - a. Conventional Records: Fish must be legally caught in a sporting manner on rod, reel and line or pole and line, and hooked with any legal hook or lure.
  - b. Fly-Fishing Records: Fish must be legally caught using conventional fly-fishing tackle. The lure used must be a recognized type of artificial fly. Treble hooks are prohibited. The use of any other type of lure or natural bait, either singularly or attached to the fly is prohibited. The fly used must be submitted with the application.
3. Two color photographs should be submitted with each application:
  - a. One of angler and fish.
  - b. One showing a clear, close-up side view of the fish.Photos become the property of the MDMR.
4. Fish **MUST** be weighed on certified scales or scales legal for trade, i.e., grocery store scales, etc. The weighing must take place in the presence of two witnesses other than the applicant who **MUST** sign the application form or a separate statement attesting that they witnessed the **OFFICIAL** weight. **NO** provision for weight loss will be allowed. The actual weight of the fish **AT THE TIME OF WEIGHING** will be the **OFFICIAL WEIGHT**. It is also desirable to include signature(s) on the application form of the witness(es), if any, to the actual catching of the fish. Witnesses to the weight and catch **CANNOT** be the same persons. Rodeo entries are considered valid and acceptable weights.
5. Length of the fish must be measured in a straight line from the tip of the snout to the tip of the tail **AND** from the tip of the snout to the fork of the tail (see diagram on p. 5).
6. Girth of the fish will be measured around the thickest portion of the body.
7. Applications for saltwater species **SHALL** be positively identified **AND** verified by a professional fisheries biologist and/or a rodeo weighmaster.
8. Only fish caught in Mississippi waters or fish caught in adjacent waters and landed in a Mississippi port will be considered.
9. The MDMR reserves the right to further check fish identification or verification of witnesses and to refuse any application that is questionable. It will be considered “just cause” for disqualification of current application and any previous records established by anyone who knowingly falsifies a Record Application. All rules will be strictly adhered to. The decision of the Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources will be final.

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# Shrimp

## COMMERCIAL METHODS OF TAKING

During open seasons and in open areas, saltwater shrimp may only be taken with shrimp trawls, trawls, butterfly nets, skimmer nets, push trawls, beach seines and cast nets. North of the barrier islands (COLREGS demarcation line), within the Mississippi Sound, shrimp may only be taken with a single net, no larger than 50 feet along headrope and 60 feet along footrope, or not more than two nets, each no larger than 25 feet on headrope and 32 feet on footrope. A test (or try) trawl no longer than 12 feet along headrope and 15 feet along footrope and used with boards not more than 30 inches in length is permitted. Trawl doors shall not exceed 8 feet by 43 inches.



Licensed shrimp trawlers may keep up to 25 pounds in total of white trout, croaker, black drum, ground mullet, gafftopsail catfish and flounder and three dozen blue crabs for personal consumption. Non-resident licensed shrimp trawlers may only keep this allowance if their respective state has a reciprocal agreement with Mississippi.

It shall be unlawful to use skimmer trawls or wing nets with a maximum size greater than 25 feet on the headrope and 32 feet on the footrope.

All recreational and commercial shrimp vessels with a mechanical assisted retrieval system must have a Turtle Excluder Device (TED). Skimmer trawl vessels may use 55-minute tow times instead of TEDs April 1 to October 31 and 75-minute tow time from November 1 to March 31. Contact NOAA 228-762-4591 for more information on these federal requirements.

## RECREATIONAL METHODS OF TAKING

**A recreational shrimp license is required for shrimp harvest by trawl.**

**Recreational shrimp harvest by cast net does not require a recreational fishing license, unless retaining finfish.**

Recreationally harvested shrimp cannot be sold.

All crabs and finfish harvested by recreational fishermen may be kept for personal consumption, but **MUST** meet minimum size and creel limits.

Cast nets or brill (brail) nets not exceeding 12-foot maximum radius may be used to catch up to 50 pounds of shrimp (heads on) per person, per day for personal consumption only in the bays located within and surrounding the cities of Bay St. Louis, Biloxi, Ocean Springs, Gautier and Pascagoula.

Persons catching shrimp with cast nets or brill nets shall not remove the heads of the shrimp on site.

Small mesh beach seines under 100 feet in length and with a maximum 1/4-inch-square mesh size are permitted.

Holders of a recreational shrimp trawling license are limited to the use of a single net measuring no larger than 16 feet along the headrope.

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## RESTRICTED AREAS

Trawling is not generally permitted in any area within 1/2 mile of the mainland, except by duly licensed live-bait dealers. Please contact the MDMR for more details on closed areas.

Trawling is prohibited north of the Intracoastal Waterway (tugboat channel) starting at midnight Dec. 31 of each year. The area south of the Intracoastal Waterway (tugboat channel) will be closed to trawling after April 30 of each year and prior to the opening of shrimp season (special extensions may be made by the Commission on Marine Resources pending sampling findings).

It shall be unlawful to recreationally or commercially trawl within the boundaries of the Gulf Islands National Seashore, which is a one-mile perimeter around Ship, Horn and Petit Bois islands.

## SEASON

Shrimp season is officially opened by public notice at such time that the MDMR's Office of Marine Fisheries has determined that the shrimp have reached legal size. As defined in Miss Code Ann. 49-15-64.1

## LEGAL SIZE

Shrimp smaller in size than 68 count to the pound are not to be taken in Mississippi waters, except by licensed live-bait boats. According to (title 22) part chapter 5 (106)

## SPECIAL PROVISIONS

It is illegal for anyone to drag or pull a trawl or tray net under the water with the bag tied or untied within any waters that are closed to shrimping. It also is illegal for anyone to clean nets by pulling them within any waters that are closed to the use of that size, type or number of trawls. Title 22, part 2, ch. 5 (106)

It is illegal to use a saltbox in Mississippi waters in which the salt solution exceeds 100 parts per thousand salinity.

Commercial shrimpers are permitted to sell their legally caught shrimp live with "Fresh Product" permit.

**For the latest updates on the Mississippi shrimp fishery, call the toll-free 24-hour Shrimp Information Hotline 1-866-We Trawl (866-938-7295).**

## LIVE-BAIT SHRIMPING

Live-bait catcher boats are prohibited from trawling north of the CSX Railroad bridge in the three coastal counties of Mississippi.

The live-bait fishery is viewed as a service to recreational fishermen and to the tourist industry of Mississippi. The special privileges granted and the regulations imposed are intended to ensure that this service may be performed with minimal impact on shrimp and fish populations.



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Written application for live-bait licenses must be made to the Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources.

Shrimp of 100 count to the pound are the minimum legal size for licensed live-bait dealers. Live-bait dealers must mark their boats and transport vehicles with the designation "LIVE BAIT" in letters at least 6 inches high on both the port and starboard sides of the vessel and at least 4 inches high on the transport vehicle. The name of the bait camp must be similarly displayed on the boat and transport vehicle.

Live-bait boats must be equipped to adequately maintain live shrimp on board. Such boats also are restricted to tows of 25 minutes or less and are not permitted to have on board in excess of 30 pounds of dead shrimp at any time.

Live-bait trawling is permitted only during the hours beginning 30 minutes before sunrise and ending at sunset, then only using a trawl no larger than 16 feet on the headrope and 22 feet on the footrope, except areas west of Bayou Caddy, where trawls may be 25 feet on the headrope and 32 feet on the footrope. Special areas may be opened to live-bait trawling and additional restrictions imposed.

Fish caught coincidental to a live-bait operation may be retained and sold for chum. Fish retained must be of legal commercial size. However, if crabs are to be kept, the dealer is required to hold a valid Mississippi commercial crab license.

Live-bait camps must meet the following special requirements:

- Each camp must have adequate holding and aerating systems, which must be cleaned of dead shrimp at least every 12 hours.
- No bulk sales of dead shrimp are permitted. Dead shrimp may be sold only with the heads attached and in containers holding no more than 16 ounces. No more than five 16-ounce containers may be sold to an individual in one day.
- Someone must be readily available to serve customers during appropriate hours, and each live-bait dealer application must include these hours, at least eight hours per 24-hour period.
- Location of the camp must be accessible to the general public by public road or waters located within the three coastal counties.

Purchasing dead shrimp in bulk quantities from a live-bait dealer is illegal and punishable by a \$5,000 fine for the first offense. Additional information and regulations governing live bait are available from the MDMR.

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# Oysters

## METHODS OF TAKING

A recreational oyster license is required for all methods of oyster harvest. During open season, oysters may be taken only by hands, tongs and dredges.

Dredges for oystering may not exceed 115 pounds in weight nor may they have an excess of 16 teeth. Teeth on the dredge must be 5 inches or less in length.

Restrictions on the maximum number of dredges carried or the maximum number of sacks that may be harvested daily will be established seasonally by the Commission on Marine Resources.

## DEFINITIONS TO KNOW\*

### APPROVED AREA

A classification used to identify a growing area where harvest for direct marketing is allowed.

### CONDITIONALLY APPROVED AREA

A classification used to identify a growing area which meets the criteria for the approved classification except under certain conditions described in a management plan.

### RESTRICTED AREA

A classification used to identify a growing area where harvesting shall be by special license and the shellstock, following harvest, is subjected to a suitable and effective treatment process through relaying or depuration.

### PROHIBITED AREA

A classification used to identify a growing area where the harvest of shellstock for any purpose, except depletion or gathering of seed aquaculture, is not permitted.

*\*Definitions from the National Shellfish Sanitation Program's "Guide for Control of Molluscan Shellfish," 2015 Revision.*

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## OYSTER REEFS

Oysters may be taken only from those waters approved for shellfish harvest by the Commission on Marine Resources. These area waters are subject to reclassification.

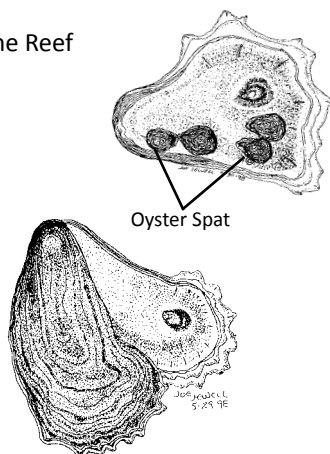
The harvesting, shucking, processing and sale of oysters must conform to all regulations specified by state statute and in the regulation adopted by the Commission on Marine Resources.

Several natural reefs are located in approved waters. They include:

- Southern Portions of the Pass Marianne Reef
- Telegraph Reef
- Buoy Reef
- Umbrella Reef
- Pelican Key Reef
- Fletcher's Key Reef

The major natural oyster reefs known to be located within conditionally approved waters include:

- Northern Portions of the Pass Marianne Reef
- St. Joe Reef (St. Joseph's Point Reef)
- Waveland Reef
- St. Stanislaus Reef
- Square Handkerchief Reef
- Henderson Point Reef
- Bay St. Louis Reef
- Kittiwake Reef (Long Beach Reef)
- White House Reef
- North and South Rigolets
- Middle Bay



Following a rainfall, riverstage or other pollution event, conditionally approved reefs and affected privately leased areas may be temporarily closed to oystering when poor water-quality conditions exist. Such closures are released to local newspapers, television and radio media. Pertinent information about the opening and closing of reefs is available by calling the **MDMR toll-free 24-hour Oyster Information Hotline at 228-374-5167 or 800-385-5902**. The information may be updated daily during oyster season. Information on the current status of any shellfish growing waters in this state may be obtained from the MDMR.

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## **SPECIAL PROVISIONS**

Both recreational and commercial oyster harvesters must purchase a license from the MDMR.

Oysters taken from Mississippi waters must be tagged. These tags are issued by the MDMR at officially designated check-in, check-out stations. These stations will be identified in the opening order for oyster season. Both commercial and recreational oyster harvesters must check in at the designated check station before going to reefs and must check out at the same station.

Tags are issued at the time of inspection. Each tag must be completed with the harvester's name, license/identification number, harvest date, harvest area and the shell-stock dealer's name and identification number if the oysters are to be sold. Tags must be affixed to the sacks with the fasteners provided by the MDMR. All harvesters are required to pay a shell retention fee to the MDMR on the day of harvest. Shell retention fees will be used to further oyster production in the state.

Oysters taken from private leases must be so designated by tags indicating the official lease numbers issued by the MDMR.

Oysters taken for personal consumption also must be inspected and a tag will be issued for each sack. Such tags will identify that the contents are not to be sold.

Each boat or vessel used to harvest or transport shellfish is required to have on board a functional, approved marine sanitation device (MSD), portable toilet or other approved sewage disposal receptacle designed to contain human sewage.

Oysters destined for interstate commerce must originate from a certified Mississippi dealer with a fixed cooler facility.

Any oysters taken from other than Mississippi waters must be accompanied by a bill of lading indicating the point of origin.

Oysters harvested outside of Mississippi waters and transported by water into the state must apply for a permit issued by the Department of Marine Resources and comply with the provisions of the permit.

Between May 1 and Sept. 30, harvest vessels must have an awning or similar covering above shellstock to provide protection from the sun.

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## SEASONS

The commercial oyster season is regulated by the Commission on Marine Resources and notice thereof will be duly released to local newspapers, radio and television media.

During open season, oysters may be taken only from legal sunrise until 4:00pm. These times are subject to change as necessary.

## LEGAL SIZE LIMITS

Oysters taken in Mississippi waters must be at least 3 inches from hinge to bill. At times, however, the MDMR may adjust this limit upon public notice to that effect.

## LEGAL CATCH LIMITS

Recreational catch limits, set by Statute 49-15-46 (4), and commercial catch limits, set by Statute 49-15-38, are set annually.



American oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*)

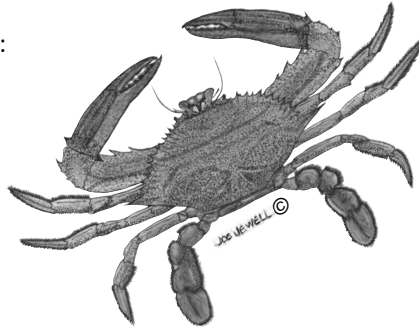
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# Crabs

## METHODS OF TAKING

Traditional methods of taking crabs:

- Traps (pots)
- Handline
- Drop net
- Dip net
- Trawls



## SPECIAL PROVISIONS

A recreational crab license is required for crab traps only.

It shall be unlawful to have any sponge crabs (egg-bearing crabs) at any time of year. All sponge crabs shall immediately be returned to the water alive.

It is illegal to remove crabs from traps or pots for which one is not specifically licensed. It is illegal to remove crab traps from the water between the hours of 1/2 hour after sunset to 1/2 hour before sunrise.

All crabs, except for peeler crabs (those that are about to shed) and soft-shell crabs (those that have recently shed), must be 5 inches or larger as measured from the tip of one lateral spine across the back of the shell to the tip of the opposite lateral spine. Peeler crabs, if under 5 inches, must be in a separate container during commercial harvest activities.

All crab trap floats must be visibly marked with corresponding commercial or recreational crab license number. In addition, all crab traps fished from only recreational boats must also be marked with the vessel's registration number. A crab trap float line must be of non-floating or weighted material and easily cut with a knife. All floats must measure 6 inches in diameter. It is illegal to place any crab trap so that the trap, the trap line or float is in any navigable waterway and interferes with normal boat traffic.

**All crab traps must be permanently marked for ownership by a corrosion-resistant metal or plastic tag attached to the trap.** The tag must be supplied by the fisherman and must be legibly stamped with license holder's full name.

To protect overwintering crabs, it is illegal to fish for crabs by any means between Jan. 1 and March 31 each year in the winter crab sanctuary west of Cat Island (see legal description in CMR Title 22 Part 4). Contact the MDMR at 228-374-5000 for more information or see map at [www.dmr.ms.gov/marine-fisheries/shrimp-a-crab](http://www.dmr.ms.gov/marine-fisheries/shrimp-a-crab).

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## COMMERCIAL

Commercial crabbing is prohibited north of the CSX railroad bridge in the 3 coastal counties of Mississippi. Crabs may be taken by trawl, but the trawl must not exceed the maximum allowable dimension specified under "Methods of Taking" for shrimp (see p. 21) and must comply with all other regulations governing the use of a trawl. Crabs incidentally caught in trawls must be immediately returned to the water unless the boat operator holds a valid Mississippi commercial crab license. Licensed shrimp trawlers and licensed oyster fishermen may keep up to three dozen blue crabs for personal consumption. Licensed commercial crab fishermen may register a buoy color code with Marine Patrol.

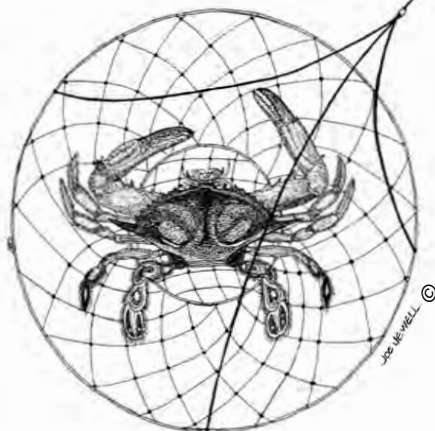
## RECREATIONAL

A recreational crab license (\$5) is required to catch crabs in traps for personal use (not for sale). The taking of crabs with drop nets is permitted without a license.

It shall be unlawful for any person recreationally fishing for crabs for personal use or consumption, by means of crab traps or crab pots, to use in excess of six such traps or pots per household. Traps or pots must be marked with the owner's name, and if traps or pots are being fished from a vessel, the traps or pots must be marked with the vessel's registration number. Recreational crab traps are not allowed north of Interstate 10.

## DIAMONDBACK TERRAPINS

Diamondback terrapins, a type of aquatic turtle, occasionally become trapped in crab traps. If you catch one, please call the Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve at 228-475-7047. Your help is greatly appreciated in the study and protection of this species of concern. Free Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) for crab traps are available from the MDMR Shrimp and Crab Bureau. Call 228-374-5000 for more information.



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# Menhaden

## METHOD OF TAKING

Menhaden are traditionally taken using purse seines. Boats and nets for taking menhaden are commercially licensed separately.

## SEASONS

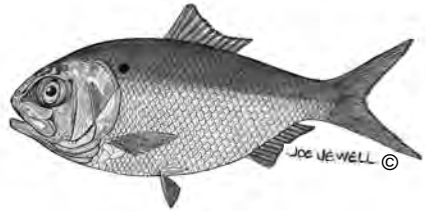
Menhaden season opens on the 3rd Monday of April and closes on Nov. 1 each year.

## SPECIAL PROVISIONS

Purse seines for taking menhaden may not be used in any bay, river or bayou, nor within one mile of the shorelines of Hancock or Harrison counties.

Purse seines may not be used to catch in excess of 5 percent by weight, in any single set of the net, any of the following species:

- Bluefish
- Cobia (ling or lemonfish)
- Dolphin
- Jack crevalle
- King mackerel
- Spotted seatrout (speckled trout)



It also is illegal for any vessel carrying a purse seine to have on board in excess of 10 percent by weight of the total catch any of the aforementioned species.

It is further illegal for any vessel carrying a purse seine to have on board any quantity of red drum.

## Data Reporting Requirements

Statistical agents of the MDMR's Office of Marine Fisheries are authorized and empowered to obtain information on all fish and shellfish landed in Mississippi. This information may be collected from the fishermen in the form of interviews and/or questionnaires and may also be obtained from the purchase slips or landing records of each seafood dealer, processor or landing firm. All such statistical information obtained by the MDMR will remain confidential and will not be released except in aggregate form.

Cooperation with statistical agents is appreciated. For more information on the statistical program and associated data reporting requirements, contact the MDMR's Office of Marine Fisheries.



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## Protected Species

Certain marine species are protected by federal law. Should any of these species be inadvertently taken in nets, on fishing hooks or otherwise, they must be taken to a rehabilitation facility or immediately released unharmed. Protected species include but are not restricted to the following:

- All marine mammals
- West Indian manatee
- Kemp's Ridley, hawksbill, leatherback, loggerhead and green sea turtles (see pg. 32)
- Atlantic and Gulf sturgeon
- Marine birds
- Smalltooth and largetooth sawfish

If an injured or dead sea turtle or marine mammal is found, immediately call the following office:

- **Institute for Marine Mammal Studies, 1-888-SOS-DOLPHIN (1-888-767-3657)**

Information on manatee sightings is greatly needed. To report a sighting, or if an injured or dead manatee is found, immediately call:

- **Manatee Sighting Network, 1-866-493-5803**

To report a captured Gulf sturgeon call:

- **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 850-769-0552**

For all other injured or dead protected species immediately notify:

- **Department of Marine Resources, 228-374-5000**

Please note that criminal violations (intentionally shooting, killing or harming endangered or threatened animals) of the Endangered Species Act carry a maximum fine of \$20,000 and a jail sentence of up to one year. Should this action be observed, call NOAA Fisheries Service or MDMR Marine Patrol.

Attention Fishermen: It is against the law to possess fish with heads, tails or flesh removed until the final destination. Fish may be eviscerated and scaled. To protect sea turtles, please discard fish parts in trash receptacles on land.

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## While Fishing, Help Save Sea Turtles

Sea turtles inadvertently caught in trawls may appear to be dead, but the Endangered Species Act of 1973 requires that fishermen attempt resuscitation of such sea turtles.

- Place the sea turtle on its breastplate (lower shell) and elevate its hindquarters several inches.
- Keep the turtle moist and in the shade. Do not put turtle in a container with water.
- Once recovered, release the turtle over the stern of the vessel (with engines in neutral).

### How to Avoid Hooking and Entangling a Sea Turtle

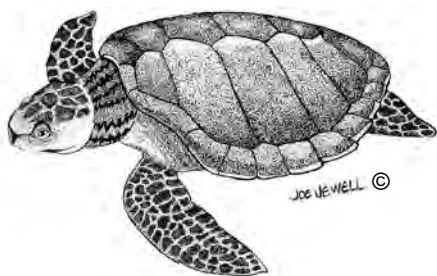
- Reuse bait and properly dispose of cleaned fish remains. Dumping bait attracts sea turtles to piers.
- Recycle fishing line and stash your trash.
- Never feed sea turtles – it is harmful and illegal.
- Use corrodible (non-stainless steel) hooks to reduce injuries to wildlife.
- Reel in your line or change location if a sea turtle is near or shows interest in your bait or catch.
- Never cast in the direction of a sea turtle.

### What to Do if You Hook a Sea Turtle

**If you catch a sea turtle while fishing, immediately call the response team at 1-888-SOS-DOLPHIN (1-888-767-3657), even if the turtle got away!**

*While you wait for the response team:*

- Do NOT lift by the hook or pulling on the line.
- Use a net or lift by the sides of the shell to bring the turtle on the pier or land. If no net is available or the turtle is too large, try to walk it to the beach.
- Leave the hook in place as removing it could cause harm.
- Keep the turtle out of direct sunlight, and cover the shell with a damp towel. Do not cover the head.



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## Marine Litter

The Marine Litter Act of 1989 prohibits the dumping of wastes, garbage and other debris from vessels and empowers the marine enforcement officers to uphold and enforce the provisions as set forth in the act. U.S. Coast Guard officers are further authorized to make arrests under federal law.

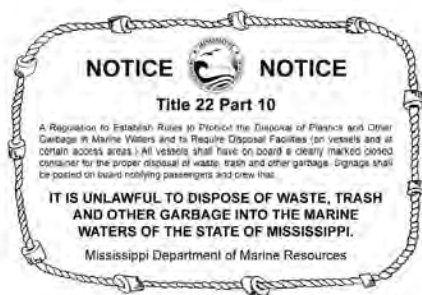
### MARINE LITTER REGULATION

- “Vessel” means any boat, barge or other vehicle operating in the marine environment from the largest supertanker to the smallest recreational craft.
- “Person” means any human individual discharging garbage from land, vessel, plane or fixed or floating platforms.
- “Garbage” means all food wastes, but does not include fresh fish or their parts.

It shall be unlawful for any person or vessel to discharge any type of plastics, including synthetic ropes, fishing nets, garbage bags and other garbage, including paper products, glass, metal, dunnage, lining and packing materials, into the marine waters of this state.

All marinas and access areas used by vessels shall be required to have proper disposal facilities on site.

All vessels shall have on board a clearly marked **closed container** for the proper disposal of waste, trash and other garbage. Signage shall be posted on board notifying passengers and crew that it is unlawful to dispose of waste, trash and other garbage into the marine waters of the State of Mississippi.



*This Marine Litter Sticker may be obtained free of charge at the MDMR. This sticker is required to be visibly displayed in all vessels (including personal watercraft) within the marine waters of the State of Mississippi.*

“Closed Container” means any sealed and properly labeled receptacle. The size and volume of the container shall be determined by the length and purpose of the cruise/voyage, the number of passengers and crew on board and the amount of trash or garbage to be generated. Closed containers shall include, but not be limited to, buckets or cans with lids, or watertight garbage bags with appropriate ties. Closed containers shall be clearly and permanently marked **TRASH** with weather-resistant materials.

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## EXCEPTIONS

The regulations contained herein shall not apply during the following emergencies:

- Discharges of garbage from a ship for the purpose of securing the safety of a ship and those on board or saving life at sea.
- The escape of garbage resulting from damage to a ship or its equipment, if all reasonable precautions have been taken before and after the occurrence of the damage to prevent or minimize the escape.
- The accidental loss of synthetic fishing nets or the loss of synthetic material during repair of nets, provided all reasonable precautions have been taken to prevent such losses.
- Refuse or other flotsam found in nets during trawling activities may legally be returned to the sea without violating these regulations. Regulations prohibit the intentional discharge of fishing nets at sea.

***Note that it is illegal to throw trash or allow it to enter into the marine waters of this state from piers, docks, bridges or land.***

## PENALTIES

Any person or vessel convicted of violating any provision of these regulations shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction shall be punished by a fine not to exceed \$500. Each day of a continuing violation constitutes a separate violation. Violations of more than one (1) section or subsection of these regulations or parts thereof shall be considered separate offenses and punished as such.

Any person or vessel convicted of a 2nd or subsequent violation of any provisions of these regulations shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction shall be punished by a fine not to exceed \$10,000.

Any person violating federal marine litter laws may receive fines up to \$50,000. A provision of the federal law may award a portion of criminal penalties or civil fines assessed against a violation to the person who gives information that leads to a conviction or assessment of a penalty.

## MISSISSIPPI COASTAL CLEANUP

The Mississippi Coastal Cleanup is held the 3rd Saturday of October as part of the International Coastal Cleanup, during which coastal states and countries around the world dedicate the day to ridding the coastline of marine debris. Mississippi has one of the most successful cleanups in the world. Along with the event, the MDMR promotes marine debris awareness and education on prevention throughout the year. Visit [www.mscoastalcleanup.org](http://www.mscoastalcleanup.org) to find out how you can participate in the next Coastal Cleanup, the largest event to help stop marine debris.

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## MISSISSIPPI MONOFILAMENT RECYCLING PROGRAM

The MDMR and partners launched the state's Monofilament Recycling Program in 2008 in an effort to reduce the amount of fishing line in the environment.



Monofilament is a strand of strong, flexible plastic used for fishing. The majority is non-degradable in water and lasts about 600 years in the environment.

Fishing line recycling tubes and bins can be found at about 30 piers and harbors across the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Carefully disposing of monofilament in these tubes and bins can help prevent fish and wildlife entanglements and death, and the destruction of boat propellers and intake valves.

For more information on the Mississippi Monofilament Recycling Program or for a list of tube and bin locations, go to [www.dmr.ms.gov](http://www.dmr.ms.gov) and click on Marine Fisheries.

## Invasive Species

Non-native invasive species can harm Mississippi's natural environments by outcompeting native animals and plants for food and space. Aquatic plants can degrade water quality, reducing oxygen available to native aquatic species.

The impact to fishing and hunting can be substantial. Fish populations can be reduced by competition from non-native species and reduced water quality. Invasive aquatic plants can cover the water surface, making fishing impossible. Reduced water quality may degrade habitat for other animals as well. Non-native aquatic plants can clog motor intakes, degrade swimming areas and can even reduce property values in areas where non-native aquatic plants have taken over.

YOU CAN HELP prevent the spread of non-native invasive plants and animals by:

- Removing any aquatic plants from boat propellers, intakes, trailers and gear before leaving a launch area.
- Never releasing plants, fish or animals into a body of water unless they came out of that body of water.
- Eliminating water from equipment before transporting.
- Blowing out jet-ski intakes and washing boats and equipment land side before traveling into a new waterway.

For more information on invasive aquatic species visit:  
[www.ProtectYourWaters.net](http://www.ProtectYourWaters.net)

To report invasive species call the MDMR at 228-374-5000.

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## General Penalties

It is a misdemeanor to violate the Seafood Laws and the rules and regulations of the Commission on Marine Resources.

Any person, firm or corporation convicted of violating any regulation adopted by the Commission on Marine Resources shall be fined no less than \$100 and no more than \$500 for the 1st offense, unless the 1st offense is committed during a closed season, in which case the fine shall be no less than \$500 and no more than \$1,000.

For a 2nd offense within a period of three (3) years, the fine will be no less than \$500 and no more than \$1,000.

For any 3rd or subsequent offense within a period of three (3) years, penalties shall include no less than \$2,000 and no more than \$4,000, or imprisonment in the county jail for a period not exceeding 30 days. Upon conviction of a 3rd or subsequent offense, the court will revoke the right of the person or boat in violation from taking any seafood from state waters for one (1) year.

In addition to any other penalties, the Commission on Marine Resources may suspend the license of any person convicted of a violation and any vessel used in the violation for a period not to exceed five (5) days for the 1st offense, and a period not to exceed 30 days for the 2nd offense.

**Upon conviction of five seafood violations within a period of five years, the Commission on Marine Resources may revoke the license of the convicted party and the vessel used in the offenses, and may prohibit indefinitely the issuance of a license to that person or vessel.**

The Commission on Marine Resources is also authorized to impose administrative penalties of not more than \$10,000 for each violation of the rules and regulations of the Commission.

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## License Sales

**24-Hour License Sales: Call 1-800-5GO-HUNT (1-800-546-4868) or purchase online at [www.ms.gov/gf/hunting](http://www.ms.gov/gf/hunting).**

**All licenses may be purchased at the MDMR, Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.**

**Recreational saltwater fishing licenses may be purchased at most Wal-Mart, Kmart, sporting goods stores, bait shops and fishing camps.**

**For more information contact the MDMR at 228-374-5000.**



or **[www.dmr.ms.gov/licenses](http://www.dmr.ms.gov/licenses)**

**Saltwater Fishing License Purchase**