

# License Requirements

## THREE CONVENIENT WAYS to Buy a Fishing License:

- Over 1,000 license dealers statewide including WRD offices, major retailers, sporting goods, bait & tackle, marinas, and hardware stores.
- Telephone 1-888-748-6887
- Internet [www.gofishgeorgia.com](http://www.gofishgeorgia.com)

Telephone and Internet available 24 hours, 7 days a week.

All licenses may be purchased by mail from the **Department of Natural Resources, License Unit, 2189 Northlake Parkway, Suite 108, Bldg. 10, Tucker, Georgia 30084**. Orders by mail must include name, address, date of birth, weight and height with the proper payment.

## WHO NEEDS A FISHING LICENSE?

Anglers age 16 and older must have a current Georgia fishing license in their possession while fishing in fresh or salt water in Georgia. Conservation Rangers may require identification when checking fishing licenses. **EXCEPTION** - a fishing license is not required to fish in private ponds (does not include ponds owned by governments-city, county, state, or federal) nor by a landowner and their immediate family when fishing on their land.

## RESIDENTS:

- Proof of residence, such as a Georgia driver's license, is required to purchase a resident fishing license.
- **Residents 65 years of age or older:** May fish with the Senior (65+) Lifetime License. This license can be obtained free from license

## LIFETIME & ANNUAL SPORTSMAN'S LICENSES

- **Lifetime licenses** are available for anglers of all ages. See page 3 for full details. The Lifetime license satisfies all state license requirements for the life of the purchaser. Senior (age 65+) lifetime licenses are free (\$10 for a permanent, plastic card).
- **Annual Sportsman's license** is a single license that covers all sport hunting & fishing licenses (except Federal Duck Stamp). Includes: Regular Hunting Lic., Primitive Weapons Lic., Big Game Lic., WMA Lic., GA Waterfowl Lic., Fishing Lic., Trout Lic. and H.I.P. permit.

dealers by furnishing proof of age (driver's license, birth certificate, etc.).

- **Permanently and totally disabled:** Residents may obtain a Disability Honorary Combination Hunting and Fishing License by applying to the License Unit. Proof of disability must accompany the application. Proof of disability may come from the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Social Security Admin., Railroad Retirement System or another government agency.
- **Persons that are blind:** May apply for a Lifetime Honorary Fishing License and must provide a Physician's certification of blindness with the application.

## RECIPROCAL AGREEMENTS

Georgia DNR has Agreements with Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, and South Carolina that allow holders of Georgia fishing licenses to fish in the waters covered without obtaining a

fishing license from the bordering state. See *Agreements with Bordering States* on pages 12-13.

## NONRESIDENTS:

- Nonresidents 16 or older, regardless of physical condition, must have a valid nonresident Georgia fishing license to fish in Georgia, **except** in private ponds.
- Nonresidents under 16 do not require a fishing license or trout license.
- Florida residents 65 years of age or older—see Agreement with Florida on page 13.
- College students (US citizens) enrolled full-time who are residing within the state may purchase a resident fishing license. A current student I.D. must be shown when purchasing a resident fishing license.
- Military persons on active status stationed at a military base in Georgia and their immediate family members may purchase a resident fishing license. A current military I.D. must be shown when purchasing a resident fishing license.
- Any violation of Georgia fishing laws or regulations can cause revocation of license.

## PUBLIC FISHING AREAS

See page 20 for license requirements to fish on a PFA.

## TROUT LICENSE

- All resident anglers ages 16 to 64 must have a trout license and a Georgia fishing license to fish in designated trout waters and to fish for or to possess trout.
- Resident Senior (65+) lifetime and honorary license holders are not required to have a trout license.
- Landowners and their immediate families may fish on their premises without a trout license.
- All nonresident anglers, 16 or older, regardless of physical condition, must possess a nonresident fishing license and nonresident trout license to fish for or possess trout or to fish in designated trout waters.
- Florida residents, 16 or older, must possess a nonresident trout license to fish for or possess trout or to fish in designated trout waters.
- **STATE PARK VISITORS** are not required to have a trout license to fish in the impounded waters of the park.

## **2003-2004 RECREATIONAL FISHING LICENSE FEES**

**License Year: April 1, 2003- March 31, 2004**

### RESIDENT LICENSES:

Sportsman's .....	\$60.00
Fishing .....	9.00
One-Day Fishing.....	3.50
Trout .....	5.00
Combination Hunting and Fishing .....	17.00
Wildlife Management Area ..	19.00

### NONRESIDENT LICENSES:

Annual Fishing .....	\$24.00
One-Day Fishing .....	3.50
7-Day Fishing .....	7.00
Trout .....	13.00
Wildlife Management Area ....	73.00

# Georgia Recreational Saltwater Fishing

## Fishing License

Resident and nonresident anglers (age 16 & older) who fish in fresh or saltwaters of Georgia must possess a Georgia Fishing license. This license is required for hook & line fishing, castnetting, seining, crabbing, gigging, sport bait trawling, and harvesting shellfish. A Georgia Fishing license is required for anglers returning to Georgia ports or transiting Georgia waters with recreational catches from federal waters beyond the state's 3-mile territorial sea. Reciprocal agreements with Alabama, South Carolina, and Florida currently do not apply to saltwaters.

Charter captains may or may not choose to purchase an annual license that covers all of their clients. For this reason, anglers booking a charter should inquire whether they will need a Georgia Fishing license or if they will be covered under the charter fishing license. See page 6 for information on license requirements.

## Saltwater Fishing Information

Information and updates on licenses, regulations, and fishing in Georgia's inshore and offshore saltwaters may be obtained by contacting:

### Georgia DNR Coastal Law Enforcement

One Conservation Way, Suite 201  
Brunswick, GA 31520-8687  
912-264-7237 or fax  
912-262-3166

### Coastal Resources Division,

Marine Fisheries Section  
One Conservation Way, Suite 300  
Brunswick, GA 31520-8687  
912-264-7218 or fax  
912-262-2318  
[www.ganet.org/dnr/crd](http://www.ganet.org/dnr/crd)

### Federal Saltwater Fishing Regulations

For information and updates on recreational fishing regulations in federal waters (3-200 miles offshore), contact:

### South Atlantic Fishery Management Council

One Southpark Circle, Suite 306,  
Charleston, SC 29407  
843-571-4366  
[www.safmc.net](http://www.safmc.net)

For information and updates on federal regulations and required permitting for tunas, billfish, and sharks, contact:

### National Marine Fisheries Service HMS Management Division

1315 East-West Hwy  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
(301) 713-2347  
[www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hmspg.html](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hmspg.html)

For information on the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary contact:

### Gray's Reef Sanctuary Program

10 Ocean Science Circle  
Savannah, GA 31411  
912-598-2345  
[www.graysreef.nos.noaa.gov](http://www.graysreef.nos.noaa.gov)

## Offshore Artificial Reefs

Georgia has 22 artificial reefs located from 3-80 miles offshore. Most are designated as Special Management Zones (SMZ) by the federal government. Within these zones, only handheld hook-and-line and spear-fishing gear may be used. For further information, coordinates, and updates on Georgia's offshore artificial reefs, contact the Coastal Resources Division.

## Boating Safety Zones

Boating safety zones have been established off Jekyll, Tybee, St. Simons, and Sea Islands. These zones extend from the northernmost point to the southernmost point of each of these islands and from the highwater mark to a distance 1,000 feet seaward. From May 1 through September 30, power boats, jet skis, and other motorized craft are prohibited in these zones.

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## Wanton Waste

Sort or cull your catch on the water. Return undersized or unwanted wildlife to the water alive. When you throw away wildlife, you are not only wasting valuable resources, but you are also breaking the law!

## SALTWATER FINFISH

### Landing Requirements/Transfer Prohibition

All saltwater finfish (including sharks) under state or federal regulation must be landed with head and fins intact. Anglers must make catches available for inspection by government officials. Saltwater finfish subject to size and bag limits cannot be transferred to another person or vessel on the water. Commercial licenses are required to sell recreationally caught finfish.

## Gear

A seine may not be used as a gill net (a net constructed of single webbing attached to a float line and lead line and fished in a stationary manner to ensnare or entangle fish in the meshes). A modified castnet or castnet with greater than 8 feet radius is allowed for taking fish for bait. Only flounder may be taken with a gig (any handheld shaft with single or multiple points, barbed or barbless). All seasons, hours, creel limits, minimum size limits, and other regulations applicable to saltwater finfish apply regardless of the gear used.

## Definitions

**Minimum Size:** the specific size in length below which it is unlawful to take that finfish species.

**Open Season:** that specified period of time during which one may take certain finfish species from any waters of the state.

**Daily Creel Limit:** the lawful amount of a species of finfish that a person may take in one day.

**Possession Limit:** the lawful amount of a species of finfish that a person can legally have at any one time.

# Saltwater Finfish

Per Person Unless Specified

<u>Species</u>	<u>Open Season</u>	<u>Daily Limit</u>	<u>Possession Limit</u>	<u>Minimum Size (in.)</u>
Blue marlin		Catch and Release Only		
White marlin		Catch and Release Only		
Sailfish		Catch and Release Only		
Tarpon*	3/16-11/30	1	1	68 FL
Amberjack	3/16-12/31 (No Sale April 1 - April 30)	1	1	28 FL
Cobia	3/16-11/30	2	2	33 FL
Dolphin	All year	10 <sup>a</sup>	10 <sup>a</sup>	20 FL
King mackerel	All year	3	3	24 FL
Spanish mackerel	3/16-11/30	15	15	12 FL
Sheepshead	All year	15	15	10 FL
Atlantic sturgeon	no harvest allowed		no harvest allowed	
Bluefish	3/16-11/30	15	15	12 FL
Black sea bass	All year	20	20	10 TL
Gag grouper	All year (No Sale March 1 - April 30)	2	2	24 TL
Red drum	All year (spottail bass, redfish, or channel bass)	5	5	14 TL (None longer than 23 in.)
Black drum	All year	15	15	10 TL
Weakfish	All year	6	6	13 TL
Flounder	All year	15	15	12 TL
Whiting	All year	no possession limit	no possession limit	10 TL
Spot	All year	25	25	8 TL
Atlantic croaker	All year	25	25	8 TL
Tripletail	All year	5	5	18 TL
Red snapper	All year	2	2	20 TL
Spotted seatrout	All year	15	15	13 TL
Striped bass <sup>b</sup>	All year	2	2	22 TL
Sand tiger shark	no harvest allowed		no harvest allowed	
Small shark composite**	All year	2	2	30 TL
Sharks***	All year	2****	2****	48 TL (limit may include only one longer than 84 in.)
Red Porgy	All year (No sale Jan. 1 - April 30)	1	1	14 TL

\* Gamefish or no sale status \*\* Consists of Atlantic sharpnose, bonnethead, & spiny dogfish

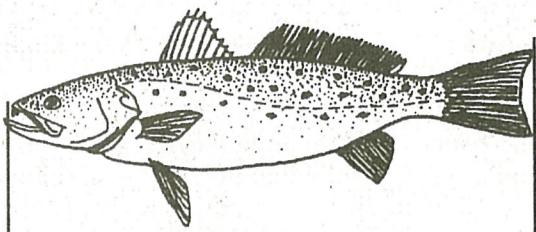
\*\*\* Consists of all sharks other than sand tiger shark & small shark composite

\*\*\*\* Two per person or boat, whichever is less FL = fork length TL = total length.

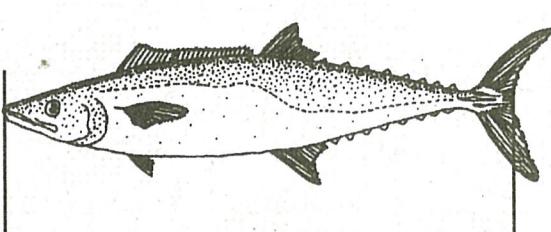
<sup>a</sup> Not to exceed 60 per boat, except for headboats which are allowed 10 dolphin per paying customer.

<sup>b</sup> See Seasons Closure in Savannah River page 8.

## Measuring Saltwater Finfish



Total Length



Fork Length

Minimum sizes for saltwater finfish are measured in two ways: Total Length (TL) is the overall length of the fish and is measured in the same manner as a largemouth bass; (see page 9 for fish measuring tips). Fork Length (FL) is used to measure fish with deeply forked tails and is the distance from the tip of the snout to the fork of the tail.

# Shrimp

## Baiting Shrimp

It is unlawful to place, deposit, distribute, or scatter any bait of any kind in, on, or over any waters so as to lure, attract, or entice shrimp toward the bait or to cause shrimp to congregate in the area where bait is placed. It is illegal to knowingly fish for shrimp in baited waters.

## Disposition and Sale of Shrimp

It is unlawful for any person to sell or otherwise dispose of, for human consumption, any shrimp taken as bait. Shrimp recreationally harvested for personal consumption may not be sold.

## SPORT BAIT SHRIMPING with POWER-DRAWN NETS

A Georgia Fishing license is required for taking shrimp for live bait with power-drawn nets 10 feet or smaller. Information on the specific net dimensions is available from DNR offices in Brunswick and Demerries Creek.

## Areas, Seasons, and Hours

A 10 foot sport bait trawl may be used to take shrimp only in rivers and creeks or portions thereof which have been opened to bait shrimping by DNR. Charts of established "Bait Zones" are available at DNR offices in Brunswick and Demerries Creek (Richmond Hill). Unless otherwise designated, bait zones are open year-round for sport bait shrimping. Sport bait shrimping is legal only between the hours of  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour before official sunrise to  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour after official sunset.

## Catch Limits - Sport Bait Trawls

A sport bait shrimper may not possess at any time more than two (2) quarts of shrimp, no more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint of which may be dead, and may not take more than four (4) quarts of shrimp within a 24-hour period. When two or more persons occupy the same boat, there may be no more than four (4) quarts of shrimp on board the boat at any time, no more than one pint of which may be dead, and no more than eight quarts of shrimp may be taken within a 24-hour period.

## SEINES

A Georgia Fishing license is required to use a seine for non-commercial purposes in the state's saltwaters. The shrimping season for seines is the

same as that established for other food shrimping season. The Commissioner of DNR can open the food shrimping season from May 15 through the end of February. During the open season, seines may be used at any time of day in authorized areas.

## Seine Sizes & Areas

Seines equal to or smaller than 12 feet long, with a maximum depth of four feet, and a maximum stretch mesh of 1 inch may be used throughout the year and throughout Georgia's saltwaters. Seines up to 100 feet long and with a minimum stretch mesh of  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches may be used on sand beaches of any barrier island in Georgia. Seines from 100-300 feet long and with a minimum mesh size of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches may be used only on the ocean-front sides of beaches. The use of seines over 12 feet long in any inlets or tidal sloughs is prohibited. Seines over 300 feet long are also prohibited. It is unlawful to use any seine in saltwaters such that it blocks more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the entrance of any tidal river, creek, slough, or inlet to the ocean.

## Seine Catch Limits

No one person taking shrimp solely by means of a seine, whether such person is acting alone or in a group of persons, may possess more than 24 quarts of shrimp with heads on or 15 quarts of tails taken by such seine in any 24-hour period. If any person or group of persons occupying the same boat are in possession of a castnet and a seine, such person or persons shall be subject to the limits imposed for shrimp taken by castnet.

## CASTNETTING FOR FOOD SHRIMP

A Georgia Fishing license is required to use castnets non-commercially to take shrimp for personal consumption. The season for castnetting for food shrimp is the same as that established for other commercial shrimping seasons. The Commissioner of DNR can open the season from May 15 through the end of February. During the open season, castnetting for personal consumption may be conducted at any time of day in all the state's saltwaters.

## Castnet Construction

Castnets used recreationally to take food shrimp are restricted to a maximum net size of eight feet in radius with a minimum  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch bar-mesh webbing and shall be constructed of uniform material from horn (thimble) to the lead line. All modifications, including duct tape, lawnchair webbing, and bubble wrap are prohibited. The lead line must have a minimum of  $\frac{3}{4}$  pound of weight per radius-foot attached.

## Food Shrimp Catch Limits

No person taking shrimp for personal consumption with a castnet may possess more than 48 quarts of heads-on shrimp or 30 quarts of shrimp tails in any day. When one or more persons occupy the same boat, there may be no more than 48 quarts of heads-on shrimp or 30 quarts of shrimp tails on board at any time. No vessel owner shall allow the vessel to be used to take more than the allowable catch limits in any day.

## CASTNETTING FOR BAIT SHRIMP

A Georgia Fishing license is required to use castnets non-commercially to take shrimp for bait. There is no closed season for castnetting for bait. Castnetting for bait may be conducted at any time of day in all of Georgia's saltwaters.

## Castnet Construction

Bait shrimp castnets must be constructed of a minimum of  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch mesh webbing with a radius not greater than eight feet. Modifications are prohibited in castnets intended for taking bait shrimp. Bait shrimp castnets cannot be used to take shrimp for personal consumption. Castnets constructed to take shrimp for personal consumption may be used to take bait. However, at no time shall there be both a bait shrimp castnet and a food shrimp castnet aboard the same vessel.

## Bait Shrimp Castnet Limits

Recreational castnetters collecting bait shrimp are limited to two quarts per person at any time, provided that person may take a maximum of four quarts of bait shrimp per day. When two or more persons occupy the same boat, there may be no more than four quarts of bait on board the boat at any

time, and the persons occupying the boat may take no more than eight quarts of bait shrimp per day. Bait shrimp taken with a castnet may be live or dead.

### CRABS

A Georgia Fishing license is required to harvest crabs for non-commercial purposes. Unless otherwise designated, saltwaters are open year-round for recreational crabbing. Recreationally caught crabs may not be sold.

### Gear

Up to six standard size crab traps (2X2 feet or smaller) may be used recreationally. Two unobstructed escapement rings ( $2\frac{3}{8}$  inch inside diameter) must be installed on an outside vertical wall. Each trap must be marked with a float bearing the owner's name and address. Traps should be sufficiently weighted to prevent loss in strong tidal currents. It is unlawful to place or set crab traps in the channel of any stream with a lawfully established system of waterway markers. Disposal of crab traps in public waters is a violation of State and Federal laws.

Subject to specific gear design criteria, sizes, time-of-day, and area restrictions outlined in these regulations, legal crabs may be taken recreationally year-round in seines and castnets.

### Crab Catch Limits

It is unlawful to take or possess any crab less than 5 inches from spike to spike across the back (other than a "peeler" or a "mature adult female" crab). Peelers must measure at least 3 inches from spike to spike across the back. No sponge crabs allowed. Other than licensed commercial crabbers, no person may take or possess more than one bushel of crabs during any 24-hour period. No more than two bushels may be taken recreationally or possessed during a 24-hour period on a boat with more than one person aboard.

### SHELLFISH

A Georgia Fishing license is required to take shellfish (oysters, clams) for non-commercial purposes. Saltwaters may be opened for taking oysters or clams between January 1 and December 31. Shellfish must be harvested between the hours of  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour before

official sunrise and  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour after official sunset. Shellfish may only be taken with handheld implements. Recreationally harvested shellfish may not be sold.

### Areas

Updated charts of approved public picking areas for shellfish should be obtained from Coastal Resources Division's Ecological Services Section. It is illegal to recreationally harvest shellfish except in designated public picking areas, unless authorized in writing by a private property owner with legal harvest rights to an area. Private property owners wishing to harvest recreational quantities of shellfish or to issue permission to others must notify and provide DNR with specific information. It is unlawful to give permission to take shellfish from a closed area. Harvesters taking shellfish from private property must have on their person proof of ownership or permission.

### Shellfish Limits

Oysters must measure no less than three inches from hinge to mouth, unless the oyster cannot be removed from a legal-sized oyster without destroying it. For clams, the maximum depth from one shell half to the other must be at least one inch thick. Recreational quantity limits are up to two bushels of oysters and one bushel of clams per person per day, with a maximum limit of six bushels of oysters and one bushel of clams per boat per day.

### BAIT MINNOWS

A Georgia Fishing license is required to harvest bait minnows for non-commercial purposes. Bait minnows may be harvested year-round. Recreationally harvested bait minnows may not be sold. Bait minnows may not be trapped in freshwater.

### Gear

No more than two traps may be used recreationally, except that a United States Coast Guard licensed captain may use a maximum of four traps. Maximum dimensions for rectangular traps may not exceed 24"x18"x9". Cylindrical traps may not exceed 24" in length and 30" in circumference. Recreational bait minnow traps shall have a mesh size of no smaller than  $\frac{1}{4}$ " bar mesh. The throat opening of

the funnel shall not exceed  $\frac{3}{4}$ " in diameter. Each trap must have attached a tag or float bearing the name and address of the person using the trap.

Subject to specific gear design criteria, sizes, time of day, and area restrictions outlined in these regulations, bait minnows may also be taken recreationally year-round in seines and castnets.

### Possession Limits

No individual recreationally harvesting bait minnows may possess more than two quarts of bait minnows at any given time. A United States Coast Guard licensed captain may possess not more than 10 quarts at any given time.

### REPORTING VIOLATIONS

To report violations, contact DNR Law Enforcement offices in Brunswick 912-264-7237 or call the Toll-Free 24-hour Hot Line 800-241-4113. To report violations in Federal waters contact United States Coast Guard stations in Brunswick 912-267-7999 and Tybee Island 912-786-5440, NOAA's toll-free, 24-hour Fisheries Enforcement hotline 800-853-1964, or DNR LE 800-241-4113.

### Sea Turtles

It is unlawful to harm, harass, or disturb any sea turtle adult, hatchling, eggs, nest, carcass, or skeletal remains under both State and Federal law. It is also unlawful to offer for sale, sell, or possess any sea turtle, or sea turtle parts. If any accidental capture occurs, release immediately either by direct release or by cutting any hook and line as close to the turtle as possible. Report any dead or injured sea turtle to the Georgia DNR, Nongame Wildlife/Natural Heritage Section, Endangered Wildlife Program 1-800-2-SAVE-ME.

### Marine Mammals

It is unlawful for any person to display, feed, net, trap, harpoon, molest or otherwise interfere with the well-being or normal activity of marine mammals including bottlenose & spotted dolphin, manatee, and any species of whale. Report sightings of dead or injured marine mammals to 1-800-2-SAVE-ME.