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FEB APR JUN

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2000 2003 2004



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North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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**2003 NC Recreational Coastal Waters Guide for Sports Fishermen**Weakfish Size and Creel Limits Changed Effective March 22, 2003 [See Proclamation](#)Size Limit for Ocean Caught Flounder Changed Effective March 3, 2003 [See Proclamation](#)[Download a Printable](#) (PDF) Version of the April 2003 Rec Guide.

	State Coastal Waters (Internal & 0-3 Miles)		Exclusive Economic Zone EEZ (3-200 miles)	
Finfish Species (note symbols)	Minimum Length	Bag Limits (Per Person)	Minimum Length	Bag Limits (Per Person)
Greater Amberjack	28" FL	1/Day	28" FL	1/Day
Bluefish		15/Day Only 5 greater than 24"		15/Day
Cobia	33" FL	2/Day	33" FL	2/Day
Dolphin (B)		10/Day		10/Day
King Mackerel	24" FL	3/Day	24" FL	3/Day
Spanish Mackerel	12" FL	15/Day	12" FL	15/Day
Tuna; Yellowfin, Bluefin, Bigeye (J) (H)			27" CFL	<a href="#">Contact NMFS</a> for closures & limits(J), Yellowfin Tuna limit 3/Day
Sharks (excluding spiny and smooth dogfish)	54-84" FL (L)	1/Vessel/Day (private boat) 1/Day (shore, charter, headboat) (L)	(F) 54" FL	1/Vessel/Day
Sharks, Atlantic Sharpnose	(L)	Included in Limit Above	(F)	1/Day
Blue Marlin( H)	99" LJFL	1/vessel/trip either Blue or White Marlin	99" LJFL	1/vessel/trip either Blue or White Marlin
White Marlin (H)	66" LJFL	1/vessel/trip either Blue or White Marlin	66" LJFL	1/vessel/trip either Blue or White Marlin
Sailfish (H)	63" LJFL	1/Day	63" LJFL	1/Day
Red Drum (Channel Bass, Puppy Drum)	18-27" TL (D)	1/Day	Unlawful to Possess	
Internal Flounder	13" TL (internal) Neuse, Pamlico, and Pungo Rivers, along with Pamlico County Bays and mainland Hyde County Bays west of Bluff Pt. (G) 14" TL (in all other internal areas) (G) No Bag Limit (internal)			
Ocean Flounder <a href="#">See Regulations</a>	15 TL	8/Day (G)	15 TL (G)	8/Day
Spotted Seatrout (Speckled)	12" TL	10/Day	12" TL	10/Day
Gray Trout (Weakfish)	12" TL	7/Day	12" TL	7/Day
Tarpon		1/Day		1/Day
Striped Bass	(A)	(A)	Unlawful To Possess	

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<b>American Eel</b>	6" TL	50/Day	6" TL	50/Day
<b>Scup (North of Cape Hatteras)</b>	8" TL	50/Day	10(E)" TL (P)	50/Day (P)
<b>Black Sea Bass (North of Cape Hatteras) (C)</b>	12" TL	25/Day	11 1/2" TL (P)	25/Day
<b>Black Sea Bass (South of Cape Hatteras)</b>	10" TL	20/Day	10" TL	20/Day
<b>Red, Scamp, Yellowfin &amp; Yellowmouth Groupers</b>	20" TL	5/Day (Species combined; only 1 speckled hind, 1 warsaw, and no more than 2 black or gag grouper - individual or combined)	20" TL	5/Day (Species combined; includes tilefish, only 1 speckled hind, 1 warsaw, and no more than 2 black or gag grouper - individual or combined) <a href="#">Contact NMFS</a>
<b>Black and Gag Groupers</b>	24" TL	2/Day (See above)	24" TL	2/Day (See above)
<b>Speckled Hind (Kitty Mitchell)</b>		1/Vessel/Trip (See above)		1/Vessel/Trip (See above)
<b>Warsaw Grouper</b>		1/Vessel/Trip (See above)		1/Vessel/Trip (See above)
<b>Red Porgy (Silver Snapper, Pinky)</b>	14" TL	1/Day	14" TL	1/Day
<b>Dog, Gray, Cubera, Mahogany, Queen, Schoolmaster, &amp; Yellowtail Snappers</b>		10/Day (Species combined; includes up to 2 Red Snapper)	12" TL	10/Day (Species combined; includes up to 2 Red Snapper)
<b>Mutton Snapper</b>		See Above	16" TL	See Above
<b>Silk and Blackfin Snappers</b>	12" TL	See Above	12" TL	See Above
<b>Red Snapper</b>	20" TL	2/Day - See Above	20" TL	2/Day - See Above
<b>Vermillion Snapper</b>	11" TL	10/Day	11" TL	10/Day
<b>Reef Complex Species Includes</b> sheepshead, spadefish, gray triggerfish, white grunt, tomtate, knobbed porgy and more (see back) (I)		20/Day		20/Day

### Prohibited Finfish Species

<b>Coastal Waters</b> (Internal waters and Atlantic Ocean out to 3 miles)	<b>EEZ</b> (Atlantic Ocean more than 3 miles)
Sturgeon, Nassau Grouper, and Jewfish. Prohibited sharks include; basking, white, sand tiger, and whale.	Sharks (Whale, Basking, White, Sand Tiger, Bigeye Sand Tiger, Atlantic Angel Shark, Bigeye Sixgill, Bigeye Thresher, Bignose, Carribean Reef, Carribean Sharpnose, Dusky, Galapagos, Longfin Mako, Narrowtooth, Night, Sevengill, Sixgill, and Smalltail), Red Drum, Striped Bass, Sturgeon, Nassau Grouper, Jewfish, and Spearfish

### Shellfish

State Coastal and EEZ Waters  
Internal and 0-200 miles

<b>Species</b> (note symbols)	<b>Minimum Length</b>	<b>Bag Limits</b> (Per Person)
<b>Blue Crab</b>	5" Carapace Width	50 crabs/day not to exceed 100 crabs/vessel/day
<b>Hard Clam</b>	1" Thick	100 clams/day not to exceed 200 clams/vessel/day
<b>Oyster (N)</b>	3" Shell Length	1 bushel/day not to exceed 2 bushels/vessel/day
<b>Bay Scallops (N)(Q)</b>		1/2 bushel/day not to exceed 1 bushel/vessel/day
<b>Conchs &amp; Whelks</b>		10/day not to exceed 20/vessel/day
<b>Mussels</b>		100/day not to exceed 200/vessel/day
<b>Shrimp</b> Cast Net Only		Closed Shrimping Area - 100 shrimp/day Open Shrimping Area - Unlimited

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18" TL minimum.

(B) Charter vessel (licensed by Coast Guard and holding NMFS Coastal Migratory Pelagic Permit) limit of 60/trip

(C) Closed season September 2-15 and all of December

(D) Unlawful to possess red drum greater than 27 inches total length. It is unlawful to take or possess red drum taken by gigs, gaffs or spears

(E) North of Cape Hatteras Scup recreational season is Jan. 1 - Feb. 28, and July 1 - Oct. 31

(F) See prohibited species, Legal sharks include; sandbar, silky, tiger, blacktip, spinner, lemon, bull, nurse, smooth and scalloped and great hammerhead, blacknose, finetooth, bonnethead, shortfin mako, blue, thresher, porbeagle, and oceanic whitetip. One (1) Atlantic sharpnose per person per trip may be landed in addition to allowable bag limits for other sharks.

(G) Restrictions apply to gigging in the Ocean. The minimum size limit of flounder taken for recreational purposes in internal waters west of a line from Point of Marsh to Bluff Point 13 inches. The size limit east of that line and in all other internal waters is 14 inches total length. A winter 2002 Ocean closure may occur, contact DMF for the most current rules.

more details.

(I) Reef complex species: whitebone porgy, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, longspine porgy, sheepshead, gray triggerfish, queen triggerfish, yellow jack, crevalle jacks, bar jack, almaco jack, lesser amberjack, banded rudderfish, white grunt, margates, spadefish, and hogfish, 20 per person per day in combination.

(J) For snapper, grouper, and mackerels contact the South Atlantic Council (1-843-571-4366 or [www.safmc.noaa.gov](http://www.safmc.noaa.gov)) or for tunas, billfishes, and sharks contact NMFS Highly Migratory Species Division 1-301-713-2347 or <http://caldera.sero.nmfs.gov/>

(L) Minimum size does not apply to Atlantic sharpnose or dogfish. Creel does not apply to dogfish. Sharks greater than 84 inches are prohibited except for tiger, thresher, bigeye thresher, shortfin mako, and hammerhead sp. Headboat or Charterboat Captain or crew are not allowed a creel limit.

(M) Season, areas, or other limits may be set by DMF. Shad (hickory and American) may only be taken with recreational commercial gear such as drift gill nets from January 1 thru April 14th, or by hook and line year round.

(N) Contact DMF for seasons, areas, or other restrictions.

(P) Pending rule changes for black seabass north of Hatteras during 2003

(Q) During the open season, scallop harvest restricted to certain hours of the day, contact DMF for all restrictions.

Total length (TL) is measured from tip of snout with mouth closed to tip of compressed tail. Fork length (FL) is measured from tip of snout to middle of fork in tail. Lower jaw fork length (LJFL) is measured from lower jaw to middle of fork in tail. Curved fork length (CFL) is the measurement of the length taken in a line tracing the contour of the body from the tip of the upper jaw to the fork of the tail.

Bag limits are not additive for state and federal waters.

Ocean boundary is defined as water seaward of the [COLREGS Demarcation Lines](#) as indicated on National Ocean Service navigation charts

No one may possess aboard a vessel or while engaged in fishing any fish subject to limits without head and tail attached, except for alewife and blueback herring used for bait provided not more than two fish per boat/operation may be cut at any one time. - Reference 15A NCAC 3M.0101

**IMPORTANT** Check with Division of Marine Fisheries for most current minimum lengths and catch limits. 252-726-7021 or 800-682-2632 (North Carolina only). For inland water limits contact Wildlife Resources Commission 919-733-3633 or visit their website [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org) .

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