NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Marine Fisheries - Recreational Fishing Size and Bag Limits

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N.C. Recreational Coastal Waters Guide for Sports Fishermen

Current Version Effective: May 6, 2015

(Website chart reflects the most recent changes to size and bag limits)

CLICK HERE for printer-friendly version

Smartphone and tablet users — view as mobile device webpage

Coastal Recreational Fishing License: Persons engaged in recreational fishing in North Carolina coastal waters are required to possess a Coastal Recreational Fishing License in accordance with G.S. 113-174.2

See also: Fish Identification and Recreational Fishing Reports
Why do we have fishing regulations?

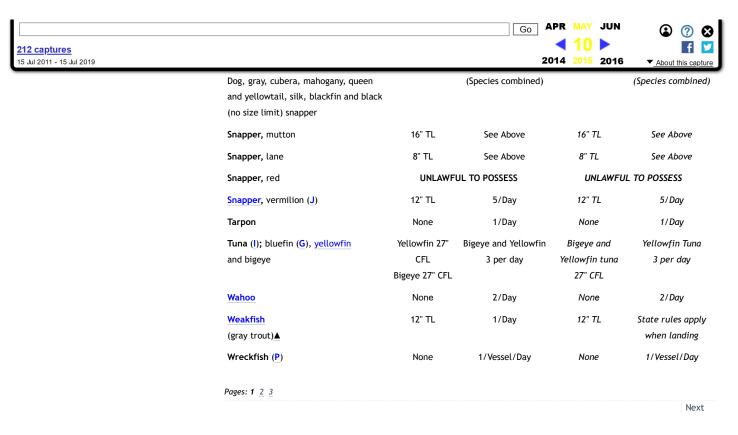
For inland fishing regulations, contact Wildlife Resources Commission 919-707-0220 or visit their website www.ncwildlife.org

| | State Coastal Waters | | Exclusive Economic Zone EEZ | |
|--|------------------------|---|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| | (Internal a | and 0-3 Miles) | (3-200 miles) | |
| Finfish Species (note symbols, pg.2) | Minimum Length | Bag Limits (Per Person) | Minimum Length | Bag Limits (Per Person) |
| Alewife and blueback herring | None | UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS | None | UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS |
| Amberjack, greater | 28" FL | 1/Day | 28" FL | 1/Day |
| Bass, striped See striped bass details | (<u>A</u>) | (<u>A</u>) | UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS | |
| Bluefish | None | 15/Day Only 5 greater than 24" TL | None | 15/Day |
| Cobia | 33" FL | 2/Day | 33" FL | 2/Day |
| Dolphin (B) | None | 10/Day | None | 10/Day |
| Drum, black | 14"-25" TL (C) | 10/Day | 14"-25" TL (C) | 10/Day |
| Drum, red ▲ (Channel bass, puppy drum) | 18-27" TL (<u>C</u>) | 1/Day | UNLAWFUL | TO POSSESS |

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| Gulf, Southern, summer | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| Grouper (<u>H</u> , <u>I</u> , <u>J</u> , <u>K</u>) | UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS SHALLOW WATER GROUPER JAN. 1 THROUGH APRIL 30 (SEE NOTE J) | | UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS SHALLOW WATER GROUPER JAN. 1 THROUGH APRIL 30 (SEE NOTE J) | |
| Grouper Red, scamp, yellowfin, yellowmouth grouper and tilefish (no size limit on tilefish) | 20" TL | 3/Day (all grouper combined; includes tilefish and no more than 1 black or gag grouper, individual or combined) (J) & (K) | 20" TL | 3/Day (all grouper combined; includes tilefish and no more than 1 black or gag grouper, individual or combined) (J) & (K) |
| Grouper black and gag | 24" TL | 1/Day (See above) | 24" TL | 1/Day (See above) |
| Grouper, snowy (K) | None | 1/Vessel/Day | None | 1/Vessel/Day |
| Hogfish (Hog snapper) | 12" FL | 5/Day | 12" FL | State rules apply when landing |
| Mackerel, king (I) Species Identification | 24" FL | 3/Day | 24" FL | 3/Day |
| Mackerel, Spanish (I) Species Identification | 12" FL | 15/Day | 12" FL | 15/Day |
| Marlin, blue (G) | 99" LJFL | 1/vessel/trip either Blue or White Marlin | 99" LJFL | State rules apply when landing |
| Marlin, white (G) | 66" LJFL | 1/vessel/trip either Blue or White Marlin | 66" LJFL | State rules apply when landing |
| Mullet (Striped and white) | None | 200/Day (species combined) | None | |
| Porgy, red (Silver snapper, pinky) | 14" TL | 3/Day | 14" TL | 3/Day |
| Sailfish (G) | 63" LJFL | 1/Day | 63" LJFL | |
| Scup (North of Cape Hatteras only) | 8" TL | 50/Day | 9" TL | 50/Day |
| Seatrout, spotted (speckled)▲ | 14" TL | 4/Day | 14" TL | 4/Day |
| Sea bass, black (North of Cape Hatteras) (D) | 12.5" TL | 15/Day | 12.5" TL | 15/Day |
| Sea bass, black (South of Cape Hatteras) | 13" TL | 5/Day | 13" TL | 5/Day |
| Shad, American (O) | None | (<u>O</u>) | UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS | |
| Shad, hickory (O) | None | (<u>O</u>) | None | 10/Day |
| Sharks (E, I, L) (excluding smoothhound sharks (smooth dogfish) and spiny dogfish) | (<u>E</u> , <u>I</u> , <u>L</u>) | 1/Vessel/Day | (E, <u>I</u> , <u>L</u>) | 1/Vessel/Day |
| Sharks, Atlantic sharpnose, smooth dogfish and bonnethead (E) | None | (E) | None | (E) |
| Snapper-Grouper Complex Species Includes spadefish, gray triggerfish, white grunt, knobbed porgy and more | N/A | 20/Day | N/A | 20/Day |

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