

Basic recreational saltwater fishing regulations for state waters of Florida

This brief summary of regulations governs the taking of saltwater species in Florida state waters for personal use. It is not applicable to the commercial harvesting of these species. The absence of complete laws, rules and regulations in this summary does not relieve persons from compliance with those laws, rules or regulations. **State waters extend to 3 nautical miles on the Atlantic and 9 nautical miles on the Gulf. Federal rules apply beyond state waters unless expressly stated otherwise. For species that do not have an established bag limit, more than 100 pounds or two fish per harvester per day (whichever is greater), is considered commercial quantities.** A saltwater products license and commercial vessel registration are required to harvest commercial quantities of unregulated species. It is illegal to sell recreationally harvested fish without compliance with commercial license requirements. Issue Forty Two, Jan. 2013. **Highlights indicate recent regulation changes.**

Species	Minimum Size Limits	Closed Season	Daily Rec. Bag Limit	Remarks
Amberjack, Greater ▲●	28" fork Atlantic; 30" fork Gulf	June 1 - July 31 Gulf of Mexico	1 per harvester per day	
Amberjack, Lesser & Banded Rudderfish ▲●	Not less than 14" or more than 22" fork		5 aggregate of lesser amberjack and banded rudderfish	
Billfish ▲	Sailfish 63"; Blue Marlin 99"; White Marlin 66" Roundscale Spearfish 66"		1 per harvester per day aggregate bag limit	Measured tip of lower jaw to fork. All landed fish must be reported to NOAA within 24 hours 800-894-5528 or hmspermits.noaa.gov. HMS permit required in federal waters.
Black Drum ▲♦↑■	Not less than 14" or more than 24"		5 per harvester per day	May possess one over 24". Snatching prohibited.
Bluefish ▲	12" fork		10 per harvester per day	
Bonefish ■			0 per harvester per day	Catch and release only. Hook and line gear only.
Clams (Hard)	1" thick across hinge	May not harvest half hour after official sunset until half hour before official sunrise	One 5 gal. bucket per harvester or 2 per vessel, whichever is less per day (whole in shell)	Illegal to harvest from closed areas. Go to www.floridaaquaculture.com for allowable harvesting areas.
Cobia (Ling) ▲	33" fork		1 per harvester or 6 per vessel per day, whichever is less	
Crab, Blue		Regional trap closures apply. See page 22 for 2013 trap closure dates and locations.	10 gallons whole per harvester per day	5 traps maximum. Trap requirements apply. Harvest of egg-bearing crabs prohibited.
Crab, Blue Land		July 1 - Oct. 31	20 per harvester per day	Trapping prohibited, harvest of egg-bearing females prohibited, harvest prohibited in state parks and from the right-of-way of federal, state or county maintained roads.
Crab, Stone ■	2 3/4" claw	May 16 - Oct. 14	1 gal. Stone Crab claws per harvester or 2 gal. per vessel, whichever is less	5 traps maximum. Trap requirements apply. Illegal to possess whole crab. Harvest of egg-bearing crabs prohibited.
Dolphin ▲	20" fork Atlantic		10 per harvester per day, not to exceed 60 per vessel per day	
Flounder ▲♦↑	12"		10 per harvester per day	May be harvested by spearing. Snatching prohibited.
Gag ▲♦●	24" Atlantic & Monroe County 22" Gulf (excluding Monroe County)	Gulf (excluding Monroe County) CLOSED. Please visit MyFWC.com for dates of 2013 Gulf open season. Atlantic & Monroe County Closed Jan. 1 - April 30.	1 per harvester per day Atlantic & Monroe County; 2 per harvester per day Gulf (excluding Monroe County)	No more than 1 fish may be Gag or Black Grouper, either individually or in combination in Atlantic & Monroe County. Included within the 3 per harvester per day (Atlantic & Monroe County) and 4 per harvester per day (Gulf excluding Monroe County) Grouper aggregate bag limit. Zero daily bag and possession limit for captain & crew on for-hire vessels. Please visit: MyFWC.com for the latest updates.
Grouper, Black ▲♦●	24" Atlantic & Monroe County 22" Gulf (excluding Monroe County)	Closed in Gulf (excluding Monroe County) Feb. 1 - March 31 Closed Atlantic & Monroe County Jan. 1 - April 30	1 per harvester per day Atlantic & Monroe County; 4 per harvester per day Gulf (excluding Monroe County)	
Grouper, Red ▲♦●	20"		3 per harvester per day Atlantic & Monroe County; 4 per harvester per day Gulf (excluding Monroe County)	Included within the 3 per harvester per day (Atlantic & Monroe County) and 4 per harvester per day (Gulf excluding Monroe County) Grouper aggregate bag limit. Zero daily bag and possession limit for captain & crew on for-hire vessels.
Grouper, Snowy ▲●			1 per harvester per day Atlantic	
Grouper, Yellowfin & Yellowmouth ▲♦●	20"	Closed in Gulf (excluding Monroe County) Feb. 1 - March 31 Closed Atlantic & Monroe County Jan. 1 - April 30		
Grouper, Scamp ▲♦●	20" Atlantic & Monroe County; 16" Gulf (excluding Monroe County)			
Grouper, Warsaw & Speckled Hind ▲●			1 per vessel per day of each species	Included within the 3 per harvester per day (Atlantic & Monroe County) and 4 per harvester per day (Gulf excluding Monroe County) Grouper aggregate bag limit. Atlantic & Monroe County: Zero daily bag and possession limit for captain and crew on for-hire vessels.
Grouper, all others ▲●		Closed in Gulf (excluding Monroe County) Feb. 1 - March 31 for Rock Hind and Red Hind Closed Atlantic & Monroe County Jan. 1 - April 30 for Tiger, Rock Hind, Red Hind, Coney, Graysby		
Hogfish ▲●	12" fork		5 per harvester per day	
Mackerel, King ▲	24" fork		2 per harvester per day	Bag limit reduced to 1 in some state waters when federal waters are closed to all harvest.
Mackerel, Spanish ▲	12" fork		15 per harvester per day	Transfer of Spanish Mackerel to other vessels at sea is prohibited.
Mullet, Striped (Black) & Silver			50 aggregate per harvester per day; Aggregate vessel limits Feb. 1 - Aug. 31: 100 per vessel; Sept. 1 - Jan. 31: 50 per vessel	
Oysters	3"	June, July, Aug. in Dixie, Wakulla, Levy counties. July, Aug., Sept. in all other areas.	2 bags per harvester or vessel, whichever is less per day. 1 Bag = 60 lbs. or two 5 gal. buckets (whole in shell)	Apalachicola Bay has summer & winter seasons/areas. Harvest from approved shellfish areas only. Go to Floridaaquaculture.com for allowable harvesting areas.
Permit ▲↑■	22" fork Special Permit Zone (SPZ); Not less than 11" or more than 22" fork all other areas	May 1 - July 31 SPZ Only	1 per harvester per day, not to exceed 2 per vessel per day SPZ; 2 per harvester per day all other state waters	May possess 1 over 22" fork length in all other areas, not to exceed 2 over 22" fork per vessel per day. For map of SPZ, please see: MyFWC.com/Fishing/Saltwater/Regulations/Permit/ .
Pompano, Florida ▲↑■	11" fork		6 per harvester per day	Hook and line, cast net, and beach or haul seine ONLY.
Pompano, African ▲↑■	24" fork		2 per harvester per day, not to exceed 2 per vessel per day.	

Species	Minimum Size Limits	Closed Season	Daily Rec. Bag Limit	Remarks
Red Drum (Redfish) ▲♦T	Not less than 18" or more than 27"		2 per harvester per day N.E./N.W. Zone 1 per harvester per day South Zone	Gigging, spearing, snatching prohibited. Harvest in Federal waters prohibited. Vessel limit 8 fish, On-shore possession limit 6 fish. See map on page 8.
Red Porgy ▲♦●	14" Atlantic		3 per harvester per day Atlantic	
Scallops, Bay		Sept. 25 – June 30	2 gallons whole or 1 pint meat per harvester per day; no more than 10 gallons whole, or ½ gallon meat per vessel anytime	Harvest allowed only in state waters of the Gulf of Mexico from the Pasco-Hernando county line, to the west bank of the Mexico Beach Canal in Bay County. It is illegal to harvest, possess and land bay scallops on waters outside open harvest area. See map on page 9.
Black Sea Bass ▲♦●	13" Atlantic; 10" Gulf		5 per harvester per day Atlantic	See page 22 for additional information.
Shad			10 aggregate per harvester per day	American, Alabama & Hickory are part of aggregate limit. Hook & line gear only.
Shark ▲T	No minimum size limit for Atlantic sharpnose, blacknose, blacktip, bonnethead, finetooth and smooth dogfish. 54" fork for all other non-prohibited sharks.		1 per harvester or 2 per vessel per day, whichever is less	Hook and line gear only. See list below for prohibited species.
Sheepshead ▲♦T	12"		15 per harvester per day	Snatching prohibited.
Shrimp ▲		April & May closed to Nassau, Duval, St. Johns, Putnam, Flagler & Clay counties	5 gallons heads on per harvester or vessel per day, whichever is less	
Snapper, Black & Wenchman ▲●			Included within 10 per harvester per day Snapper aggregate bag limit	
Snapper, Cubera ▲♦●	12" (see remarks)		Included within 10 per harvester per day Snapper aggregate bag limit if under 30"	May possess no more than 2 Cubera Snapper over 30" per harvester or vessel per day, whichever is less. 30" or larger not included within the Snapper aggregate bag limit.
Snapper, Gray (Mangrove) ▲♦●	10"		5 per harvester per day	Included within 10 per harvester per day Snapper aggregate bag limit.
Snapper, Lane ▲♦●	8"		Included within 10 per harvester per day Snapper aggregate bag limit Atlantic	Gulf not included within the Snapper aggregate bag limit.
Snapper, Mutton ▲♦●	16"		Included within 10 per harvester per day Snapper aggregate bag limit	
Snapper, Red ▲♦●	20" Atlantic; 16" Gulf	Gulf CLOSED – check MyFWC.com for 2013 Gulf season dates Atlantic OPEN	2 per harvester per day	Included within 10 per harvester per day Snapper aggregate bag limit. Note: Check MyFWC.com/Fishing for most current regulations prior to fishing. Gulf: Zero daily bag and possession limit for captain and crew on for-hire vessels.
Snapper, Schoolmaster ▲♦●	10"		Included within 10 per harvester per day Snapper aggregate bag limit	
Snapper, Vermilion ▲♦●	12" Atlantic; 10" Gulf	Nov. 1 – March 31 Atlantic	5 per harvester per day Atlantic; 10 per harvester per day Gulf	Vermilion Snapper not included within the Snapper aggregate bag limit. Atlantic: Zero daily bag and possession limit for captain and crew on for-hire vessels.
Snapper, all other ▲♦●	12"		Included within 10 per harvester per day Snapper aggregate bag limit	Includes: Blackfin, Dog, Mahogany, Queen, Silk & Yellowtail.
Snook (all species) ▲♦T■	Not less than 28" or more than 32" Atlantic Not less than 28" or more than 33" Gulf and Monroe County	Atlantic (excluding Monroe) closed Dec. 15 – Jan. 31 and June 1 – Aug. 31. Gulf and Monroe County CLOSED until Sept. 1, 2013	1 per harvester per day	Snook permit required for harvest when saltwater license required. Illegal to buy or sell snook. Snatch hooks and spearing prohibited.
Spiny Lobster ▲	Carapace must be greater than 3" measured in the water	April 1 – Aug. 5 Exception: Sport Season July 24 – 25, 2013	Sport season: 6 per harvester per day in Monroe County and Biscayne National Park, 12 per day in all other harvest areas.	Recreational trapping prohibited. Spiny Lobster permit required when license required. Harvest of egg-bearing females prohibited. Special bag limit for 2-day Sport Season.
Sponge, Commercial ■	Greater than 5" in greatest dimension measured across the top of the sponge		10 per harvester per day	Includes: Sheepswool, Yellow, Grass, Glove, Finger, Wire, Reef & Velvet sponge.
Spotted Seatrout ▲♦T■	Not less than 15" or more than 20" (statewide) except one fish over 20" per person		5 per harvester per day N.W. Zone 4 per harvester per day S.W. Zone 4 per harvester per day S.E. Zone 6 per harvester per day N.E. Zone	May possess no more than 1 over 20"; included in the regional bag limit. See management zone map on page 8.
Swordfish	47" lower jaw fork length with head attached or 29" cleithrum to keel length if head removed.		1 per harvester per day, not to exceed a maximum of 4 per recreational (not for-hire) vessel or 15 per for-hire vessel per day	All landed fish must be reported to NOAA within 24 hours 800-894-5528. HMS permit required in federal waters. Zero daily bag and possession limit for captain and crew of for-hire vessels.
Tarpon			2 fish possession limit	Requires \$50 tarpon tag to possess or harvest. Snatching and spearing prohibited. Boca Grande Pass has seasonal regulations.
Tilefish, Golden ▲●			1 per harvester per day Atlantic	Included within the 3 per harvester per day (Atlantic & Monroe County) and 4 per harvester per day (Gulf excluding Monroe County) Grouper aggregate bag limit. Atlantic: Zero daily bag and possession limit for captain and crew on for-hire vessels
Triggerfish (Gray) ▲●	12" fork Atlantic; 14" fork Gulf			Possible rule changes could affect seasons and bag limits. Check MyFWC.com for regulatory updates.
Tripletail ▲♦T	15"		2 per harvester per day	Hook & line gear only. No snatch hooks.
Wahoo ▲			2 per harvester per day	
Weakfish ▲♦	12"		1 per harvester per day	Regulations apply in parts of Nassau County only. See map on page 9.

- ▲ Must remain in whole condition (removal of gills and guts allowed).
- ♦ Measured as total length. Total length is the straight line distance from the most forward part of the head with the mouth closed to the farthest tip of the tail with the tail compressed or squeezed together while the fish is lying on its side.
- State regulations apply in federal waters.
- Additional gear rules apply. See *Reef Fish Gear Rules* page 11.
- T Harvest prohibited by or with the use of any multiple hook in conjunction with live or dead natural bait.

PROHIBITED SPECIES

It is unlawful to harvest, possess, land, purchase, sell, or exchange the following species: Goliath Grouper (Jewfish), Nassau Grouper, Sawfish, Atlantic Angel Shark, Basking Shark, Bigeye Sand Tiger Shark, Bigeye Sixgill Shark, Bigeye Thresher Shark, Bignose Shark, Caribbean Reef Shark, Caribbean Sharpnose Shark, Dusky Shark, Galapagos Shark, Lemon Shark, Longfin Mako Shark, Narrowtooth Shark, Night Shark, Silky Shark, Sand Tiger Shark, Sandbar Shark, Sevengill Shark, Sixgill Shark, Smalltail Shark, Spiny Dogfish, Whale Shark, White Shark, Tiger Shark, Great Hammerhead Shark, Scalloped and Smooth Hammerhead Shark, Manta Ray, Spotted Eagle Ray, Longbill Spearfish, Mediterranean Spearfish, Sturgeon, Florida Queen Conch, Stony, Hard and Fire Corals, Sea Fans, Bahama Starfish, and Longspine Urchin. Harvest of live roe in state waters is prohibited. Puffer fish harvest is prohibited in Volusia, Brevard, Indian River, St. Lucie and Martin counties.

Harvester: Regardless of what species you are fishing for, bag limits are only for properly licensed individuals and those people exempt from licensing requirements who are actively harvesting. People harvesting may not exceed the individual bag limit and take someone else's bag limit. That is, people (including children) who are not actively harvesting or are not properly licensed (if license is required) may NOT be counted for the purpose of bag limits.

For information on bag limits during multi-day trips, returning with fish from the Bahamas and spearing, please see "Other Information" at: MyFWC.com/Fishing/Saltwater/Recreational

For saltwater fish identification, request a copy of FWC's *Fishing Lines* magazine or visit: MyFWC.com.

