

# 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 Three, July, 2013. Highlights indicate recent regulation changes.

| Species                                   | Minimum Size Limits   | Closed Season  | Daily Rec. Bag Limit  | Remarks  |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| Amberjack, Greater ▲ ●                    | 28" fork Atlantic;<br>30" fork Gulf   | June 1 – July 31<br>Gulf   | 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";<br>Blue Marlin 99";<br>White Marlin 66"<br>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 ▲ ▢ T ■                        | Not less than 14" or more than 24"  |  | 5 per harvester per day   | May possess one over 24". Snatching prohibited.  |
| Black Sea Bass ▲ ▢ ●                      | 13" Atlantic; 10" Gulf  |  | 5 per harvester per day Atlantic  |  |
| 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 <a href="http://www.floridaaquaculture.com">www.floridaaquaculture.com</a> 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 8 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 ¾" 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 ▲ ▢ T                            | 12"   |  | 10 per harvester per day  | May be harvested by spearing. Snatching prohibited.  |
| Gag ▲ ▢ ●                                 | 24" Atlantic & Monroe County<br>22" Gulf (excluding Monroe County)                          | Gulf state waters (excluding Franklin, Wakulla, Jefferson, Taylor and Monroe) OPEN July 1, 2013 – Dec. 3, 2013, and will CLOSE on Dec. 4, 2013. Atlantic & Monroe County Closed Jan. 1 – April 30. | 1 per harvester per day Atlantic & Monroe County;<br>2 per harvester per day Gulf (excluding Monroe County)                             |  |
| Grouper, Black ▲ ▢ ●                      | 24" Atlantic & Monroe County<br>22" Gulf (excluding Monroe County)                          | Closed Atlantic & Monroe County Jan. 1 – April 30  | 1 per harvester per day Atlantic & Monroe County;<br>4 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.  |
| Grouper, Red ▲ ▢ ●                        | 20"   |  | 3 per harvester per day Atlantic & Monroe County;<br>4 per harvester per day Gulf (excluding Monroe County)                             |  |
| Grouper, Snowy ▲ ●                        |   | Closed Atlantic & Monroe County Jan. 1 – April 30  | 1 per harvester per day Atlantic  | All grouper species in Atlantic and Monroe Counties – zero bag and possession limit for captain and crew on for-hire vessels.<br>Red, Black and Gag Grouper – Gulf (excluding Monroe County) zero daily bag and possession limit for captain and crew on for-hire vessels. |
| Grouper, Yellowfin & Yellowmouth ▲ ▢ ●    | 20"   |  |   |  |
| Grouper, Scamp ▲ ▢ ●                      | 20" Atlantic & Monroe County; 16" Gulf (excluding Monroe County)                            |  |   |  |
| Grouper, Warsaw & Speckled Hind ▲ ●       |   |  | 1 per vessel per day of each species  |  |
| Grouper, all others ▲ ●                   |   | Closed Atlantic & Monroe County Jan. 1 – April 30 for Tiger, Rock Hind, Red Hind, Coney, Graysby   |   |  |
| Hogfish ▲ ●                               | 12" fork  |  | 5 per harvester per day   |  |
| Lionfish                                  |   |  | Unlimited   | No license required to harvest by dip net, pole spear, Hawaiian sling.   |
| 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;<br>Aggregate vessel limits<br>Feb. 1 – Aug. 31: 100 per vessel;<br>Sept. 1 – Jan. 31: 50 per vessel |  |
| Oysters                                   | 3"  | June, July, Aug. in Dixie, Wakulla, Levy counties.<br>July, Aug., Sept. in all other areas.  | 2 bags per harvester or vessel, whichever is less per day.<br>1 Bag = 60 lbs.<br>or two 5 gal. buckets (whole in shell)                 | Apalachicola Bay has summer & winter seasons/areas. Harvest from approved shellfish areas only. Go to <a href="http://Floridaaquaculture.com">Floridaaquaculture.com</a> for allowable harvesting areas.   |
| Permit ▲ T ■                              | 22" fork Special Permit Zone (SPZ); Not less than 11" or more than 22" fork all other areas | May 1 – July 31<br>SPZ Only  | 1 per harvester per day, not to exceed 2 per vessel per day SPZ;<br>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: <a href="http://MyFWC.com">MyFWC.com</a> .  |
| Pompano, Florida ▲ T ■                    | 11" fork  |  | 6 per harvester per day   | Hook and line, cast net, and beach or haul seine ONLY.   |

| Species                        | Minimum Size Limits  | Closed Season  | Daily Rec. Bag Limit   | Remarks  |
|--------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Pompano, African ▲ T ■         | 24" fork   |  | 2 per harvester per day, not to exceed 2 per vessel per day.   |  |
| Red Drum (Redfish) ▲ □ T       | Not less than 18" or more than 27"   |  | 2 per harvester per day N.E./N.W. Zone<br>1 per harvester per day South Zone with a vessel possession limit of 8 fish                            | Gigging, spearing, snatching prohibited. Harvest in Federal waters prohibited. On-shore possession limit during transportation of 6 fish. See map on page 8.   |
| Red Porgy ▲ □ ●                | 14" Atlantic   |  | 3 per harvester per day Atlantic   |  |
| Scallops, Bay                  |  | Open June 29-Sept. 24, 2013  | 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. |
| 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 OPEN June 1-July 14. CLOSURES July 15, 2013. Gulf OPEN Oct. 1-Oct. 21. Atlantic OPEN year-round                     | 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   |  | 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<br>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 OPEN Sept. 1-Nov. 30, 2013 | 1 per harvester per day  | Snook permit required for harvest when saltwater license required. See page 14 for snook permit details. Snatch hooks and spearing prohibited.   |
| Spiny Lobster ▲                | Carapace must be greater than 3" measured in the water   | April 1-Aug. 5<br>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.  |
| 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<br>4 per harvester per day S.W. Zone<br>4 per harvester per day S.E. Zone<br>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. Changes proposed, check MyFWC.com for updates.  | 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   | Gulf state waters CLOSED June 1-July 31  | Gulf: 2 fish per person  |  |
| 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.  |

- ▲ 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 rock 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.




**Scan this QR Code to view current regulations.**

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](http://MyFWC.com/Fishing/Saltwater/Recreational)