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| **2016 NORTH CAROLINA RECREATIONAL COASTAL WATERS GUIDE FOR SPORTS FISHERMEN — May Version** | | |
| **\*\*IMPORTANT\*\* CHECK WITH DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES FOR MOST CURRENT MINIMUM LENGTHS AND CREEL LIMITS.**  **252-726-7021 OR 800-682-2632. FOR INLAND WATER FISHING REGULATIONS, CALL WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMISSION 919-707-0220 OR** [**WWW.NCWILDLIFE.ORG**](http://WWW.NCWILDLIFE.ORG)  **Persons engaged in recreational fishing in North Carolina coastal waters are required to possess a Coastal Recreational Fishing License in accordance with G.S. 113-174.1** |

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|  | **STATE COASTAL WATERS (Internal and 0-3 miles)** | | **EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE-EEZ (3-200 miles)**  **EEZ restrictions noted in italics are Federal Rules** | |
| **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 | None | 15/Day, only 5 greater than 24” TL | *None* | *15/Day* |
| Cobia | 33” FL | **1/Day** | *33” FL* | *State rules apply when landing* |
| Wahoo | None | 2/Day | *None* | *2/Day* |
| Dolphin (B) | None | 10/Day | *None* | *10/Day* |
| King Mackerel (I) | 24” FL | 3/Day | *24” FL* | *3/Day* |
| Spanish Mackerel (I) | 12” FL | 15/Day | *12” FL* | *15/Day* |
| Tuna (I): Bluefin (G), Bigeye and Yellowfin | Bigeye and Yellowfin tuna  27” Curved FL | Yellowfin tuna  3 per day | *Bigeye and Yellowfin tuna*  *27” Curved FL* | *Yellowfin tuna*  *3 per day* |
| Sharks (excluding Smoothhound Sharks (smooth dogfish) and Spiny Dogfish) (E, I, L) | (E, I and L) | 1/Vessel/Day | *(E, I and L)* | *1/Vessel/Day* |
| Sharks: Atlantic Sharpnose, and Bonnethead (E) | None | (E) | *None* | *(E)* |
| Blue Marlin (G) | 99” LJFL | 1 per vessel per trip, either blue marlin or white marlin | *99” LJFL* | *State rules apply when landing* |
| White Marlin (G) | 66” LJFL | *66” LJFL* |
| Sailfish (G) | 63” LJFL | 1/Day | *63” LJFL* |  |
| Red Drum (Channel Bass, Puppy Drum)▲ | 18” – 27” TL (C) | 1/Day | *UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS* | |
| Flounder ▲ (R) | 15” TL | 6/Day | *15” TL* | *6/Day* |
| Spotted Seatrout (Speckled Trout) ▲ | 14” TL | 4/Day | *14” TL* | *4/Day* |
| Weakfish (Gray Trout) ▲ | 12” TL | 1/Day | *12” TL* | *State rules apply when landing* |
| Sheepshead | 10” FL | 10/Day | *State rules apply when landing* | *State rules apply when landing* |
| Black Drum | 14” – 25” TL (C) | 10/day | *14” – 25” TL (C)* | *10/Day* |
| Tarpon | None | 1/Day | *None* | *1/Day* |
| Striped Bass | (A) | (A) | *UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS* | |
| American Shad (O) | None | (O) | *UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS* | |
| Hickory Shad (O) | None | (O) | *None* | *10/Day* |
| Alewife and Blueback Herring | UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS | | *UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS* | |
| American Eel (Q) | 9” TL | 25/Day | *9” TL* | *25/Day* |
| Scup (North of Cape Hatteras only) | 8” TL | 50/Day | *9” TL* | *50/Day* |
| Black Sea Bass (North of Cape Hatteras) (D) | **12.5” TL** | **15/Day** | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | ***12.5” TL*** | ***15/Day*** | **15/Day** | | |
| Black Sea Bass (South of Cape Hatteras) | 13” TL | 5/Day | *13” TL* | *5/Day* |
| Grouper (H, I, J and K) | **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)* | |
| Red, Scamp, Yellowfin and Yellowmouth Grouper, and Tilefish (no size limit on Tilefish) | 20” TL | 3/Day (all grouper combined; includes 1 golden tilefish and no more than 1 black or gag grouper, individual or combined)  (J) & (K) | *20” TL* | *3/Day (all grouper combined; includes 1 golden tilefish and no more than 1 black or gag grouper, individual or combined)*  *(J) & (K)* |
| Black and Gag Grouper (K) | 24” TL |  | *24” TL* |  |
| Snowy Grouper, Blueline Tilefish (K) | 1/vessel/day (included in 3 grouper aggregate)  Harvest allowed May 1 through August 31 | | *1/vessel/day (included in 3 grouper aggregate)*  *Harvest allowed May 1 through August 31* | |
| Red Porgy (Silver Snapper, Pinky) | 14” TL | 3/Day | *14” TL* | *3/Day* |
| Dog, Gray, Cubera, Mahogany, Queen and Yellowtail, Silk, Blackfin and Black (no size limit) Snapper (I) | 12” TL | 10/Day (species combined) | *12” TL* | *10/Day (species combined)* |
| Mutton Snapper (I) | 16” TL |  | *16” TL* |  |
| Lane Snapper (I) | 8” TL |  | *8” TL* |  |
| Red Snapper (I) | **UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS** | | ***UNLAWFUL TO POSSESS*** | |
| Hogfish (Hog Snapper) (I) | 12” FL | 5/Day | *12” FL* | *5/Day* |
| Vermilion Snapper (I) | 12” TL | 5/Day | *12” TL* | *5/Day* |
| Wreckfish (P) | None | 1/Vessel/Day | *None* | 1/Vessel/Day |

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|  | | | STATE COASTAL WATERS (Internal and 0-3 miles) | | | EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE-EEZ (3-200) **EEZ restrictions noted in italic are Federal Rules** | |
| **FINFISH SPECIES (note symbols)** | | | Minimum Length | Bag Limits (per person) | | Minimum Length | Bag Limits (per person) |
| SNAPPER GROUPER COMPLEX SPECIES Includes spadefish, white grunt, knobbed porgy and more (see note H and I) | | | N/A | 20/Day | | *N/A* | *20/Day* |
| Gray Triggerfish (see note H and I) | | | 12” FL | *12” FL* |
| Mullet, striped and white | | |  | 200/Day (species combined) | |  | |
| PROHIBITED FINFISH SPECIES | | | | | | | |
| **COASTAL WATERS (Internal waters and Atlantic Ocean out to 3 miles)** | | | | | | FEDERAL WATERS (Atlantic Ocean more than 3 miles) | |
| Sharks; (whale, basking, white, sand tiger, bigeye sand tiger, Atlantic angel shark, bigeye sixgill, bigeye thresher, bignose, Caribbean reef, Caribbean sharpnose, dusky, Galapagos, longfin mako, narrowtooth, night, sandbar, silky, sevengill, sixgill, and smalltail), sturgeon, Snowy Grouper, Nassau grouper, Goliath grouper (jewfish), Warsaw grouper, speckled hind and red snapper. | | | | | | Sharks; (whale, basking, white, sand tiger, bigeye sand tiger, Atlantic angel shark, bigeye sixgill, bigeye thresher, bignose, Caribbean reef, Caribbean sharpnose, dusky, Galapagos, longfin mako, narrowtooth, night, sandbar, silky, sevengill, sixgill, and smalltail), red drum, striped bass, sturgeon, Snowy Grouper, Nassau grouper, Goliath grouper (jewfish), red snapper, speckled hind, Warsaw grouper and longbill spearfish. | |
| SHELLFISH and CRUSTACEANS | | **STATE COASTAL AND EEZ WATERS (Internal and 0-200 miles)** | | | | | |
| Minimum Size | | | **Bag Limits (per person)** No Shellfish License Required for these quantities and less | | |
| BLUE CRAB (M) | | 5” Carapace Width (minimum) (F) | | | 50 crabs/day not to exceed 100 crabs/vessel/day | | |
| HARD CLAM | | 1 “ Thick | | | 100 clams/day not to exceed 200 clams/vessel/day | | |
| OYSTER (N) | | 3” Shell Length | | | 1 bushel/day not to exceed 2 bushels/vessel/day | | |
| BAY SCALLOP (N) | | None | | | ½ bushel/day, not to exceed one bushel per vessel | | |
| CONCHS and WHELKS | | None | | | 10/day not to exceed 20/vessel/day | | |
| MUSSELS | | None | | | 100/day not to exceed 200/vessel/day | | |
| SHRIMP | Closed Shrimping Area | None | | | 4 quarts (heads on) or 2 ½ quarts (heads off) of shrimp per person per day **(Cast Net Only)** | | |
| **Open Shrimping Area** | None | | | 48 quarts (heads on) or 30 quarts (heads off) of shrimp per person per day or if vessel is used, per vessel per day (RCGL max. limit of 2 /vessel) | | |

SYMBOLS TO LOOK FOR

1. Albemarle Sound Management Area: contact DMF for seasons, areas or other limits; Atlantic Ocean year-round: 1 per person per day at 28” TL minimum; Other Coastal Fishing Waters; 2 per person per day at 18” TL minimum except unlawful to possess between 22” – 27” TL in Joint Fishing Waters. This Includes hybrid bass. Season: October through April, statewide by Proclamation. Moratorium in Cape Fear River system.
2. Limit of 10/person/day or 60/trip, whichever is less. On headboats, limit is 10/person/day. No sale of recreational bag limit on vessels operating as charter or headboats.
3. Unlawful to possess red drum greater than 27 inches total length. Unlawful to gig, spear, or gaff red drum.One **black drum** per person per day over 25” TL is allowed.

(D) **Black sea bass NORTH of Cape Hatteras, open in TWO harvest seasons: 12:01 A.M. May 15 through midnight September 21, 2016 AND 12:01 A.M. October 22 through midnight December 31, 2016.**

(E) See prohibited species list above; Legal sharks include: 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 (no minimum size) and one bonnethead (no minimum size) per person per day may be landed in addition to allowable bag limits for other sharks. Spiny dogfish and smoothhound sharks (smooth dogfish) are exempt from harvest and size restrictions **See most recent Proclamation.**

(F) Mature female crabs are exempt from minimum size.

(G) In state or federal waters, federal permit required for Highly Migratory Species, excluding Atlantic bonito, little tunny (albacore), and blackfin tuna: 978-281-9370. Prior to removal from vessel, all billfishes, swordfish and bluefin tuna must be reported at NC HMS reporting stations. DMF website for more details.

(H) Snapper grouper complex species: whitebone porgy, jolthead porgy, knobbed porgy, saucereye porgy, gray triggerfish, bar jack, almaco jack, lesser amberjack, banded rudderfish, white grunt, margate, sailor’s choice, spadefish and scup (south of Hatteras). 20 per person per day in combination **when the species are open to harvest.** (see note I below).

(I) For seasons, bag limits, size limits or closures for tunas, billfishes, and sharks contact NMFS Highly Migratory Species Division 800-894-5528. For snapper, grouper, and mackerels contact the South Atlantic Council 843-571-4366 or [www.safmc.net](http://www.safmc.net), and **see the most recent FF-Snapper Grouper recreational proclamation**. **Possession of red snapper is prohibited.**

(J) **Shallow water grouper species (gag, black, red, scamp, rock hind, red hind, coney, graysby, yellowfin, and yellowmouth grouper) harvest is prohibited January 1–April 30.**

(K) Grouper in the management unit include: snowy, red, yellowfin, yellowmouth, black, yellowedge, misty, gag, scamp, red hind, rock hind, graysby, and coney. The three (3) grouper bag limit also includes blueline, golden and sand tilefish. Maximum of one golden tilefish per person per day and maximum of one blueline tilefish and one snowy grouper per vessel per day (**when season is open**). New regulations establish a May 1 through August 31 season of one snowy grouper and one blueline tilefish per vessel per day. **No possession of Nassau, goliath and warsaw groupers and speckled hind.**

(L) It is unlawful to possess blacknose, finetooth, blacktip, bull, lemon, nurse, spinner, tiger, blue, oceanic whitetip, porbeagle, shortfin mako and common thresher less than 54 inches (FL). It is unlawful to possess great, scalloped and smooth hammerhead sharks less than 78 inches (FL). It is unlawful to possess a great, scalloped or smooth hammerhead or oceanic whitetip shark while in possession of tunas, billfish or swordfish.

(M) One crab pot may be used from private property or private pier, without a license – Reference 15A NCAC 3J .0302.

(N) Contact DMF or visit <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/proclamations> for seasons, areas, or other restrictions. Bay Scallop and Oyster harvest are closed.

(O) It is unlawful to take or possess American Shad from the Atlantic Ocean. For aggregate creel limits for American shad and hickory shad, **see most recent Proclamation.**

(P) Season open July 1 – August 31.

(Q) Season open January 1 - August 31, except year round when taken by baited pots.

(R) Season open January 1 – October 15.

▲ Size and creel limits for spotted seatrout, flounder, red drum and gray trout taken in inland waters are the same as the recreational limits for those species in adjacent joint and coastal waters.

Total length (TL) is measured from tip of snout with mouth closed to top 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. Anglers cannot catch both a federal and state bag limit for the same species on the same trip.

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

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| Morehead City Office (24 hours)  800-682-2632 or  252-726-7021 | Elizabeth City Office  800-338-7805 or  252-264-3911 | Manteo Office  252-473-5734 | Washington Office  800-338-7804 or  252-946-6481 | Wilmington Office  800-248-4536 or  910-796-7215 | NMFS (Fed. Reg.)  301-427-8505 |
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THIS FLYER IS EFFECTIVE May 1, 2016 AND IS FOR GENERAL INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES AND HAS NO LEGAL FORCE OR EFFECT. FISHERY RULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. THESE RESTRICTIONS APPLY TO FISH TAKEN FOR RECREATIONAL PURPOSES AND INCLUDE HOOK AND LINE. Updated State regulations can be found at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/recreational-fishing-size-and-bag-limits> and updated Recreational Commercial Gear License information can be found at [http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/recreational-commercial-gear-license.](http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/recreational-commercial-gear-license.%20)  Issued 05/1/16.This document is printed on recycled paper.