



MASSACHUSETTS
Division of Marine Fisheries
PAUL J. DIDDATI, DIRECTOR

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Finfish

Recreational Finfish Regulations as of Jun 07, 2005

Species	Season Open - Close	Size Limit	Possessi Limit
American Eel (1)	All Year	6 in	50 fish
Black Sea Bass (2)	All Year	12 in	20 fish
Blue Marlin (7)	All Year	86 in	1 fish
Bluefish	All Year	none	10 fish
Cod	All Year	22 in	10 fish
Dab (Plaice)	All Year	14 in	none
Dogfish	All Year	none	none
Fluke	All Year	17 in	7 fish
Gray Sole (Witch)	All Year	14 in	none
Haddock (8)	All Year	19 in	none
Halibut	All Year	36 in	1 fish
Monkfish	All Year	17 in	none
Pollock	All Year	none	none

Last Updated:
February 6, 2006

Redfish	All Year	9 in	none
River Herring (6)	<i>Harvest, possession, sale and use are prohibited</i>		
Sailfish (7)	All Year	57 in	1 fish
Scup (3)	May 01 - Aug 31	10.5 in	25 fish
Shad	All Year	none	6 fish
Sharks	<i>Federal rules apply. Consult NOAA Fisheries</i>		
Smelt	Jun 15 - Mar 15	none	none
Striped Bass (4)	All Year	28 in	2 fish
Tautog	All Year	16 in	3 fish
Tunas	<i>Federal rules apply. Consult NOAA Fisheries</i>		
Weakfish	All Year	16 in	10 fish
White Marlin (7)	All Year	62 in	1 fish
White Perch	All Year	8 in	25 fish
Windowpane	All Year	12 in	none
Winter Flounder (5) <i>north of Cape Cod</i>	All Year	12 in	8 fish
Winter Flounder (5) <i>south & east of Cape Cod</i>	Apr 23 - May 22	12 in	4 fish
	Sep 24 - Oct 23	12 in	4 fish
Yellowtail Flounder	All Year	13 in	none

Notes:

- 1) Subject to regulation by the Division and local community. Consult local regulat
- 2) Black sea bass are measured from the tip of the snout or jaw (mouth closed) to farthest extremity of the tail, not including the tail filament
- 3) Scup has a recreational limit of 25 fish per angler with a maximum of 50 fish pe private vessel with 2 or more fishermen on board. Anglers on for-hire vessels a allowed 60 fish per angler during May and June only.
- 4) Bass must be kept whole, with head, tail and body intact - no mutilation permit (other than evisceration). The discard of dead, legal size striped bass is prohibit To prohibit the practice of high-grading, recreational fishermen may not retain legal-sized striped bass and release said fish in favor of another larger legal-siz striped bass captured subsequently. It shall be unlawful to keep striped bass ali in the water by attaching a line or chain to the fish or placing the fish in a live v or holding car. Striped bass are measured from the tip of the snout or jaw (mou closed) to the farthest extremity of the tail.
- 5) Winter flounder may not be taken from Mount Hope Bay and its tributaries exce recreational fishermen may take 4 fish between Apr 13 and May 19 and betwee Sep 28 and Oct 28
- 6) It is unlawful for any person to harvest, possess or sell river herring in the Commonwealth or in the waters under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth. These measures will expire on January 1, 2009.
- 7) Billfish are measured from the tip of the lower jaw to the tail fork
- 8) Federal rules apply beyond state waters. consult [NOAA Fisheries](#).

Shellfish

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Recreational Shellfish Regulations

Species	Minimum Size	Other Restrictions
Blue Crab	4 1/8" shell width (spine to spine)	egg bearers cannot be 50 crabs/day; no closed season is 1/1 - inclusive
Other Edible Crabs (excludes green crabs)	none	same as for blue crab
Lobster	3 1/4" carapace length 5" carapace maximum length on lobster taken from the Gulf of Maine (includes Cape Cod Bay)	egg bearers cannot be v-notched female lot cannot be taken; state license required
Bay Scallop	well defined growth ring	consult town regulations
Conch	2 3/4" shell width	consult town regulations
Oyster	3" shell diameter	consult town regulations
Quahog	1" shell thickness	consult town regulations
Sea Scallop	3 1/2" shell height	daily limit of 1 bush shell, or 4 quarts of soft meats
Softshell Clam	2" shell diameter	consult town regulations
Surf Clam	5" shell diameter	consult town regulations

Regulations are subject to change; contact the Division for details (617) 626-1520.

Lobster

	<u>Gulf of Maine Recreational Lobster Area</u>	<u>Southeastern Recreational Lobster Area</u>
Minimum Size	3 1/4"	3 3/8"
Maximum Size	5 "	N/A
V-notching	Zero-Tolerance definition: (V-shaped notch of any size with or without setal hairs)	ASFMC definition: (1/4" to 1/2" straight-sided triangular cut without setal hairs)
Escape Vent	1 15/16" x 5 3/4" or two circular vents of 2 7/16"	2" x 5 3/4" or two circular vents of 2 7/16"
Bag Limit	15	15

[Map of Recreational Lobster Areas](#) **PDF**

Definitions

Anadromous Fish: Saltwater fish that return to fresh water systems to reproduce.

Angling: Fishing with handline or rod, with naturally or artificially baited hook.

Closed Season: The time when fish cannot be lawfully taken.

Fish: Any animal life inhabiting the ocean or connecting waters, including crustacea and marine fish, whether free swimming or free moving, any shellfish or sea worms, whether not imbedded in the soil.

Coastal Waters Under the Jurisdiction of the Commonwealth: All the waters w the rise and fall of the tide extending out to three miles from an established coastal baseline and all the waters of Massachusetts Bay, Cape Cod Bay, and Nantucket Sou does not include the waters within or above any fishladder or dam, nor the waters at any tidal bound established by DEP in streams flowing to the sea.

Minimum Size Limits are measured as the greatest **straight** line (not curved over body) length in inches as measured on a fish with its mouth closed from the anterior the jaw or snout to the farthest extremity of the tail. For fish with forked tails, the up and lower fork may be squeezed together to measure the tail extremity.

Sale of Fish: A commercial permit is required to sell fish.

Snagging or Snatching: The taking of fish not attracted by bait or artificial lure wit hooks, gangs or lures whether baited or unbaited, in a manner as to pierce and hook in any part of the body other than the mouth.

Prohibitions

Snagging, Snatching of Anadromous Fish: including shad, smelt, white perch, st bass, trout, and salmon, but excluding alewives or river herring is prohibited.

The taking of striped bass by any other means other than hook and line is prohibi

The discard of dead, legal size striped bass is prohibited.

The taking of billfish using other than a rod and reel is prohibited.

The taking of Atlantic Salmon, Sturgeon, all Marine Mammals, all sea turtles the Diamond Back Terrapin from Massachusetts waters is prohibited.

For anyone, except the owner, to handle destroy or molest any lobster or cr or other fishing gear including any gear swept up on the shore, beaches or flats wl public or private, or to take fish there from is illegal.

To take crabs by pot without a permit is illegal.

Permits

Presently, there is no license requirement for recreational saltwater angling, however commercial permit is required when any fish are sold.

Non Commercial Lobster Permits are required to fish for or take lobsters for pers use, using a maximum of 10 pots. This authorizes the holder and members of the ho immediate family, residing in the same residence, to fish for and take lobsters. The immediate family is defined as the spouse, parents, children, grandparents, sisters a brothers of the permit holder. This permit may be endorsed for **diving** by only the p holder. Other family members may purchase additional permits for diving only.

> [Renew your Non-Commercial Lobster Permit online](#)

Recreational Shellfishing is permitted in designated clean areas and regulated by individual Towns. Contact your Town department of Natural Resources for local regul and permit acquisition.

Note: A person may, without a special permit, use a small net of **no more than 201 square feet** inside those inshore waters listed in 322 CMR 4.02(2) or inside any estu embayment, salt pond, tidal creek, river, or an other similar body of inshore water fc sole purpose of obtaining bait fish for personal use.

DMF Recreational Fishing/Research Programs

Tagging - Periodically the Division conducts tagging studies of a particular finfish species to develop a better understanding of local movements, habitat preference, migration growth, and general abundance. The angler plays a significant role in retrieving valuable data. Carefully examine your catch for tags. If found, record the tag number if returning fish to water, or snip off the tag if keeping fish. Contact the address printed on the tag; you will be briefed on the tagging study and may even receive a reward. Note: Recreational snapper bluefish, striped bass, winter flounder, and cunner have been tagged in our waters. The Division participates in federal tagging programs as well.

Saltwater Fishing Derby - Our Division sponsors an annual fishing derby. Contact the Pocasset office for details.

Catch & Release - The Division encourages the proper handling of fish that are to be released. Catch and release practitioners should follow accepted handling conventions such as reduced play time, minimizing exposure to air, and minimizing physical damage from hooking and handling to ensure the highest possible chances for survival.

Division of Marine Fisheries Sportfish Biologists --

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Boston, MA 02114
(617) 626-1520
FAX: (617) 626-1509

Sportfish Biologists

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30 Emerson Avenue
Gloucester, MA 01930
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FAX: (617) 727-3337

Pocasset Office
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Pocasset, MA 02559
(508) 563-1779
FAX: (508) 563-5482

[Brad Chase](#) - North Shore

[Paul Caruso](#)

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Martha's Vineyard Office
P.O. Box 68
Vineyard Haven, MA 02568
(508) 693-4157
FAX: (508) 693-0600 call first

[Greg Skomal](#) - Islands

Division of Law Enforcement

Hewitts Cove	(617) 727 - 0082
Radio Room	(617) 727 - 6398
North Coastal Bureau	(978) 283 - 7764
Toll Free Number	(800) 632 - 8075

For more information see chapter 130 of the Massachusetts General Laws and Code of Massachusetts Regulations, Title 322.

The rules and regulations are subject to change without notice. Contact the Division of Marine Fisheries for current regulations.

Questions or comments
regarding this site should be sent to
marine.fish@state.ma.us

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