

Definitions

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

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

Open Periods: The dates when fish can be lawfully taken.

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

Coastal Waters Under the Jurisdiction of the Commonwealth: All the waters within 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 Sound. It does not include the waters within or above any fish ladder or dam, or the waters above any tidal bound established by DEP in streams or rivers flowing to the sea.

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

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

Prohibitions

Snagging, Snatching of Anadromous Fish: including shad, smelt, white perch, striped bass, trout, and salmon, but excluding alewives or blueback herring.

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

To "high grade" striped bass, i.e. the discard of dead, legal size striped bass.

To retain live striped bass in the water by attaching to a stringer or placing in a live well or holding car.

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

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

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

To take lobsters, or crabs by trap, without a lobster pot permit.

To sell, barter or exchange fish, or shellfish without a commercial permit.

Permits

Presently, there is no license requirement for recreational saltwater angling, however, a commercial permit is required when **any** fish or shellfish are sold, bartered or exchanged.

Non-commercial Lobster Permits are required to fish for or take lobsters for personal use, using a maximum of 10 pots or diving. This authorizes the holder and members of the holder's 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 and brothers of the permit holder. This permit may be endorsed for **diving** by the permit holder only. Other family members may purchase additional permits for diving only.

Recreational Shellfishing is permitted in designated clean areas and regulated by individual towns. Contact your town department of natural resources for local regulations and permit acquisition.

Note: A person may, without a special permit, use a cast net or **other small net of no more than 250 square feet in size**, for the sole purpose of obtaining bait fish, for personal use. Permits are required for any other net use. Surface gillnets must be tended (be within 200 feet) at all times when deployed.

Tuna and Billfish

Atlantic tunas and billfish are regulated by the federal government. The tuna program is based at: National Marine Fisheries Service Atlantic Tunas Program, Northeast Regional Office, Gloucester, MA 01930-2298. Call 1-888-USA-TUNA for further information.

DMF Recreational Fisheries 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, mortality 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 and you will be briefed on the tagging study and may even receive a reward. Note: Recently, cod, striped bass, winter flounder, tautog 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 including a separate catch and release derby. Contact our New Bedford office or visit our website 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.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries

Boston Headquarters
251 Causeway Street, Suite 400
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 626-1520
FAX: (617) 626-1509

Recreational Fisheries Program Biologists

Annisquam River Marine Station
30 Emerson Avenue
Gloucester, MA 01930
(978) 282-0308
FAX: (617) 727-3337

Matt Ayer - North Shore

*Paul Caruso - Cape Cod
South Shore*

John Boardman - South Coast

Martha's Vineyard Office
P.O. Box 68
Vineyard Haven, MA 02568
(508) 693-4372
FAX: (508) 693-4157

Greg Skomal - Islands

DMF Homepage: <http://www.mass.gov/marinefisheries>

Environmental Law Enforcement

Hewitts Cove.....781 - 740 - 1163
Radio Room.....617- 727 - 6398
North Coastal Bureau.....978 - 283 - 7764
Toll free Number.....1 - 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 or visit our web site.

Massachusetts Marine Recreational Fishing

Information

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Paul J. Diodati
Director

Michael P. Armstrong, Ph.D.
Manager, Recreational Fisheries Program

Deval L. Patrick, Governor
Ian A. Bowles, Secretary, E.O.E.E.
Mary Griffin, Commissioner, Dept. Fish and Game

SPECIES	NOTE	MIN. SIZE	OPEN PERIODS	POSSESSION LIMITS
AMERICAN EEL		6"	All year	50 fish
BLACK SEA BASS		12.5"	All year	20 fish
BLUEFISH		None	All year	10 fish
COD	(6,7)	22" (6a)	All year	10 fish
		24" (6b)	April 1-Oct. 31 Nov 1 - March 31	10 fish 2 fish
FLUKE		18.5"	July 1 – August 13	5 fish
HALIBUT		36"	All year	1 fish
HADDOCK		18"	All year	None
PLAICE (DAB)		14"	All year	None
RIVER HERRING	(5)	NA	None	No possession
SCUP	(3)	10.5"	May 24 - Sep. 26	10 fish
SHAD	(1)	None	All year	6 fish
SMELT	(1)	None	6/16-3/14	None
STRIPED BASS	(1,2)	28"	All year	2 fish
TAUTOG		16"	All year	3 fish
TUNA AND BILLFISH	See note on reverse side and note 1 below			
WEAKFISH		16"	All year	6 fish
WHITE PERCH		8"	All year	25 fish
WINDOWPANE FLOUNDER		12"	All year	None
WINTER FLOUNDER	(4)(8)	12"	April 25-May 24 Sept 26 - Oct 25 (4a)	4 fish
			All year (4b)	8 fish
YELLOWTAIL FLOUNDER		13"	All year	None
REDFISH		9"	All year	None

- Notes:**
1. Striped bass are to be taken by hook & line only, all billfish by rod & reel only, shad and smelt by angling only.
 2. Mutilation of striped bass in such a way as to interfere with proper and adequate measurement is prima facie evidence of a violation. The discard of dead, legal size striped bass is prohibited. High grading or retention of live fish on a stringer or in a live well is prohibited.
 3. Maximum 50 scup per private vessel.
Party/charter vessel patrons: 11" size limit, 45 fish May 15 - June 28, 10 fish June 29 - September 17.
 4. Two areas - (4a) regulations apply south and east of Cape Cod Cod, including east facing estuaries of outer Cape Cod (4b) regulations apply north of Cape Cod (Gulf of Maine), including the Cape Cod Canal land cut.
 5. Alewife and blueback herring (collectively know as river herring) are closed to harvest. Possession is limited to 5% by count of bait fish.
 6. Two areas - (6a) regulations apply south and east of Cape (6b) regulations apply north of Cape Cod (Gulf of Maine). Possession limit for (6b) includes a 75 pound maximum per vessel. Different possession limits and seasons may apply to party and charter boats in both areas.
 7. Two Cod Conservation Zone closures are in effect in Massachusetts Bay, please refer to our web site for details.
 8. Mount Hope Bay and its tributaries - April 13 - May 19 and September 28 -October 28 only - 4 fish

SPECIES	MINIMUM SIZE	OTHER RESTRICTIONS
BLUE CRAB	4 1/8" shell width (spine to spine)	egg bearers cannot be taken; 50 crabs/day; no license required unless using traps; closed season is 1/1 - 4/30 inclusive
OTHER EDIBLE CRABS (excludes green crabs)	None	same as for blue crab
LOBSTER	3 1/4" minimum and 5" maximum carapace lengths in the Gulf of Maine Recreational Area , 3 3/8" minimum for the Southern New England Recreational Area and Outer Cape Recreational Area , 5 1/4" maximum for the Southern New England Recreational Area	egg bearers cannot be taken; v-notched female lobster cannot be taken; state license required 15 lobsters/day harvest and possession limit while lobstering
BAY SCALLOP	well defined growth ring	Closed 4/1-10/1 consult town regulations
CONCH	2 3/4" shell width	consult town regulations
OYSTER	3" longest shell diameter	consult town regulations
QUAHOG	1" shell thickness	consult town regulations
SEA SCALLOP	3 1/2" shell height	daily limit of 1 bushel in shell, or 4 quarts of shucked meats
SOFTSHELL CLAM	2" longest shell diameter	consult town regulations
SURF CLAM	5" longest shell diameter	consult town regulations