



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Division of Marine Fisheries

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### Marine Fisheries Advisory

#### IMPORTANT REMINDER FOR RECREATIONAL SHARK FISHERS

The coastal and offshore waters around Massachusetts are home to a diversity of shark species. Being able to identify these different shark species is critical in determining which species, if caught, may be retained ("Permitted Species"), and which must be immediately released without undue harm ("Prohibited Species"). Commonly caught Permitted Species include blue sharks, common thresher sharks, and porbeagle sharks, and commonly caught Prohibited Species include sand tiger sharks, white sharks, shortfin mako sharks, sandbar ("brown") sharks, and dusky sharks. If you catch a shark that you are unable to identify, please remember to follow this guidance from NOAA Fisheries, "*If you don't know, let it go.*" The full list of Permitted and Prohibited sharks can be found on DMF's recreational fishing limit [webpage](#).

Recreational fishers are also reminded that when targeting sharks, the use of circle hooks as the terminal tackle is mandatory except if fishing with flies or artificial lures. Sharks incidentally caught on any other terminal tackle must also be immediately released back to the sea in a manner that maximizes their survival. In Massachusetts, recreational fishers may only retain and land one shark among all Permitted Species with the allowance for one additional bonnethead shark, one additional Atlantic sharpnose shark, and one additional smooth dogfish shark to be retained per trip. This trip limit applies per vessel regardless of the number of permit holders onboard. Additionally, recreational fishers may not retain or possess oceanic whitetip sharks, hammerhead sharks (including great, scalloped and smooth), or porbeagle sharks if tunas, billfish, or swordfish are also retained. If a Permitted Species of shark is retained, it may not be filleted or finned at sea and the head, tails and fins are to remain attached to the carcass until the shark is landed. A 54" recreational minimum size limit applies to all Permitted Species except hammerhead sharks (78" minimum) and the following five species without a size limit: Atlantic sharpnose, bonnethead, smooth dogfish, blacknose, and finetooth.

Before shark fishing, make sure you are properly permitted. Fishing for sharks in state waters requires only a Massachusetts' Recreational Saltwater Fishing License. Fishing for sharks in federal waters requires a NOAA Highly Migratory Species Permit with a shark endorsement. To acquire the federal shark endorsement, you must also complete a short, online shark identification and regulations quiz. Please note that state and federal shark fishing regulations may differ. If you are federally permitted, you are bound to the federal regulations when fishing in state waters, unless the state rule is more restrictive, in which case the state rule would apply. Participating in shark tagging programs does not exempt you from any regulatory or permitting requirements.

Lastly, it is unlawful for any person to attract a white shark; this includes using bait, chum, dyes, decoys, acoustics, or other similar methods. Additionally, the capture of white sharks is prohibited and any white shark incidentally caught must be immediately released in a manner that maximizes its survival.

For more information, please visit our website:

[www.mass.gov/marinefisheries](http://www.mass.gov/marinefisheries)

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