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Marine Fisheries Advisory

Know Before You Go! Reminder about MA's Recreational Striped Bass Fishing Rules

As the striped bass season heats up, please make sure your fishing activity is legal. This advisory serves as a reminder of the existing recreational fishing rules—none are new in 2026—and all serve to support the long-term sustainability of the resource.

Harvest Limit: The recreational striped bass harvest limit is one fish per person per day. Only fish that measure at least 28" total length but less than 31" total length may be retained. Total length is to be measured as the greatest straight-line length (not over the curve of the body) from the anterior most tip of the jaw or snout, with the fish's mouth closed, to the farthest extremity of the tail, with the tail squeezed together. Dead legal-sized striped bass may not be discarded.

Circle Hooks: All recreational anglers are required to use inline circle hooks when fishing for striped bass with whole or cut natural baits, except when fishing with a natural bait attached to an artificial lure (e.g., tube and worm). Striped bass caught on an unapproved method of take must be returned to the water immediately without unnecessary injury.

Filleting: Striped bass must be kept whole except for gutting, bleeding, and scaling until on shore and all gear is stowed, at which time fish may be filleted. Only two fillets may be in possession of an individual angler and each fillet must have two square inches of skin intact until the angler reaches their domicile or temporary residence. An exception is granted for striped bass being prepared for immediate consumption at sea, provided all gear is stowed. Additionally, for-hire operators and their crew may fillet striped bass for their patrons at any time during the for-hire trip prior to the patrons departing the vessel, provided: (1) the racks are retained in a manner that does not interfere with species identification or total length measurement until such time as the vessel has docked and all customers from that trip have departed the vessel and the racks may subsequently be disposed of in any legal manner; (2) at least two square inches of skin is left intact and no more than two fillets, representing the equivalent of one fish, may be possessed by each customer.

Gaffs and Other Injurious Devices: Only non-lethal and non-injurious devices may be used to remove striped bass from the water or aid in their release. Gaffing striped bass is strictly prohibited by recreational anglers.

High-grading: It is unlawful to discard legal-sized striped bass (previously captured and retained) in favor of larger legal-sized striped bass. To prevent this practice, it is also unlawful to keep a striped

bass alive in water by attaching a line or chain to the fish (i.e., a stringer) or placing it in a live well or holding car.

Mixing Trips: Recreational (including for-hire) and commercial fishing activity may not occur during the same trip. No striped bass or any other species caught during a recreational fishing trip—be it from shore, a private vessel, or a for-hire vessel—may be sold (with the exception of bluefin tuna and swordfish).

Recreational Fishing License: A saltwater recreational fishing license is required to fish in marine waters, whether you plan to keep any fish or not. This requirement applies to all anglers, except: anglers under 16 years old; anglers fishing on permitted for-hire vessels; anglers who meet the definition of a disabled person in MGL c.19c; and most non-resident anglers with a valid NH, RI, or CT recreational saltwater fishing permit. Refer to our [permitting webpage](#) for more details and to get your permit. All fees collected help to improve the recreational fishing experience in Massachusetts!

To learn more, check out DMF's [Recreational Saltwater Fishing webpage](#).