

Massachusetts Saltwater Fishing Derby Information and Rules

The Massachusetts Saltwater Fishing Derby consists of two parts: the **Weigh-In Derby** and the **Catch & Release Derby**. Three Divisions have been created: "Inshore", "Groundfish", and "Large Pelagic". The Derby runs from January 1st through November 30th.

Eligibility

All saltwater anglers are eligible except:

- Captains or mates of for-hire vessels or shore guides while under charter.
- Those actively engaging in commercial fishing during a trip.
- Persons convicted of violating fishery laws or regulations or who have had administrative permit sanctions for violations of fishery laws or regulations within five (5) years of the Derby year.

Derby Rules

- Anglers age 16 and older must possess a Massachusetts Recreational Saltwater Fishing Permit (or a Recreational Saltwater Permit from MH, RI, or NH).
- All entries must be submitted on an official entry form. Weigh-In Derby entry forms must be filled in and submitted at an official weigh station. Fish may only be weighed in at one station.
- Catch & Release forms should be submitted directly by the angler.
- Mailed entries must be received within 30 days of catch and be postmarked no later than December 10.
- Anglers may submit multiple entries, but may earn only one pin per species for both the Weigh-In and Catch & Release Derbies.
- All state record-qualifying entries must be photographed with a side-view of the fish on a clearly discernable measuring device.
- All fish must be caught on rod and reel or hand line and in a sporting manner. Powered reels may not be used¹.
- Fish must be caught in Massachusetts waters or first landed in a Massachusetts port.
- Junior categories apply to anglers age 15 or younger.
- Mutilated, cut, scaled, harpooned, speared, shot, or frozen fish are not eligible.
- Protests of catch must be notarized and submitted in writing within two weeks of any alleged violation of Derby rules. The Derby Coordinator may request additional information at any time and for any reason, and violations of any these rules may result in exclusion from the Derby. All decisions made by the Derby Coordinator are final.

Additional rules for Catch & Release

- Fish must be released alive—the use of a gaff or harpoon is prohibited.
- Fish must be boated and measured for total length (closed jaw to tip of the tail; the tail may be squeezed for measurement) except for tuna, sharks, billfish, and swordfish, which are measured to the fork of the tail. Lengths should be measured to the nearest half inch (see how to measure fish on page two).
- A photo of the fish must be submitted with the entry form. The photo must be a side-view of the fish on a clearly discernable measuring device.

Prizes

- One trophy will be awarded to the top Male, Female, and Junior for each species in both the Weigh-In and Catch & Release portions of the Derby.
- Winners receive free entry to the New England Boat and RV Show for the winning angler and their guest(s), with a private Mass DMF family-friendly reception directly following the ceremony.
- One Top Shop award (as free advertising in the Saltwater Fishing Guide) will be presented to the tackle shop that weighs in the most derby eligible fish. A Skillful Skipper award (a trophy and free advertising in the Saltwater Fishing Guide) will be presented to the head boat or charter captains with 3 winning fish caught from his or her boat while for-hire.
- One Angler of the Year award in both the Adult and Junior categories will be presented to the angler winning the most categories for Weigh-In, Catch and Release, or a combination of the two.
- In the event of a tie for any award, the earliest entry will be used as a tiebreaker.

1. Information on Saltwater Angler access Programs (including directions for entering a fish caught with a power reel or adaptive equipment by an individual with a disability) is available by contacting saltwater.derby@mass.gov.



Contact Information

Derby email
saltwater.derby@mass.gov

Derby Coordinator: John Boardman
John.boardman@mass.gov

For more information and printable entry forms, visit:
mass.gov/saltwater-fishing-derby

Eligible species and minimum qualifying weights and lengths below:

Inshore Derby Species	Weigh In (lb.)		Catch & Release (in.)	
	Adult	Junior	Adult	Junior
Atlantic Bonito	5	4	24	22
Atlantic Mackerel	2	1	16	15
Black Sea Bass	4	2	20	15
Bluefish	12	6	32	26
Dolphinfish	15	5	30	24
False Albacore	10	7	25	23
Fluke	7	3	22	18
King Mackerel	6	4	30	28
Scup	2	1	15	12
Spanish Mackerel	4	3	24	22
Striped Bass	35	15	40	32
Tautog	8	4	20	18
Weakfish	8	4	22	18
Winter Flounder	3	2	17	14

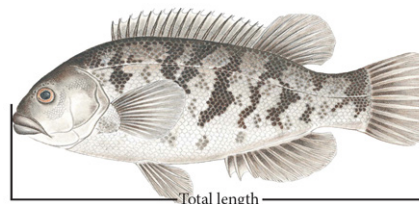
Groundfish Derby Species*	Weigh In (lb.)	Catch & Release (in.)
Atlantic Cod	30	30
Atlantic Halibut	50	50
Cusk	20	25
Haddock	8	20
Pollock	12	30

Large Pelagic Derby Species*	Weigh In (lb.)	Catch & Release (in.)
Albacore	30	30
Atlantic Sailfish	40	63
Bigeye Tuna	100	30
Blue Marlin	350	99
Blue Shark	300	60
Bluefin Tuna	500	30
Porbeagle Shark	150	60
Shortfin Mako	150	60
Swordfish	150	55
Thresher Shark	200	65
Wahoo	30	40
White Marlin	60	66
Yellowfin Tuna	50	30

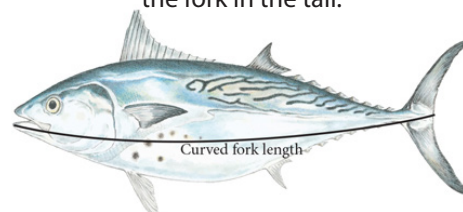
* Junior entries in this category must meet the listed criteria

How to measure fish

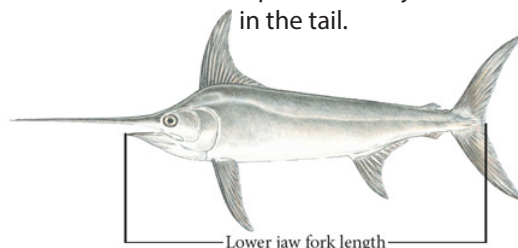
Most fish must have the total length measured. This is from the tip of a closed jaw straight to the farthest point of the tail. The tail may be squeezed for easier measuring.



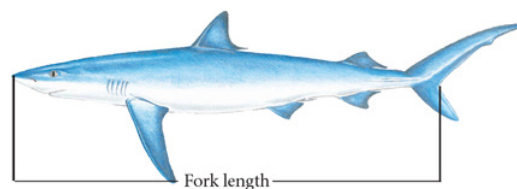
Tunas must have a curved fork length measured. These are measured from the tip of a closed jaw to the fork in the tail.



Billfish (marlins and sailfish) and swordfish must have a lower jaw fork length measured. These are measured from the tip of a closed jaw to the fork in the tail.



Sharks are measured from the tip of the snout to the fork in the tail.



Field Stations

Annisquam River Marine Station

30 Emerson Avenue, Gloucester, MA 01930
(978) 282-0308

South Shore Marine Station

836 S. Rodney French Blvd.
New Bedford, MA 02744
(508) 990-2860

Environmental Law Enforcement

Toll-free number: 1-800-632-8072