

New Jersey Marine Digest

May 2013

BLACK SEA BASS

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Director's Message



BY DAVE CHANDA

This year the excitement and anticipation of another marine fishing season will be somewhat tempered by the memory and ongoing reminders of Superstorm Sandy's devastating blow to coastal communities and the state's commercial and recreational marine fisheries. Governor Christie has been – and continues to be – a strong advocate for securing the aid necessary to rebuild the hopes and dreams of residents and communities hardest hit by the storm. The DEP and our Division's Marine Fisheries staff have worked tirelessly since the storm to assess, monitor, repair and mitigate the storm's impacts to water and sewer infrastructure, state park and wildlife

management area facilities plus our marine and coastal waterways and natural resources. Great progress has been made in clean-up and rebuilding. However, the storm's impacts to marine anglers and the marine fishing industry will require substantially more relief than was provided by the storm relief package approved by Congress.


On November 16, 2012, Acting Secretary of Commerce Blank determined a fishery resource disaster occurred in New Jersey and New York, which provided a basis for Congress to appropriate disaster relief funding. As part of the larger Sandy relief package, \$5 million was appropriated by Congress for expenses related to fishery impacts in both New Jersey and New York because of Hurricane Sandy. The two states will determine how the \$5 million dollars will be split later this spring. Unfortunately, the losses sustained by our state's fishing industry far exceed the \$5 million dollars currently appropriated.

The National Marine Fisheries Service conducted an independent assessment of the economic losses incurred by New Jersey and New York's fishing industries because of Hurricane Sandy. The report, released on March 15, 2013, estimated that the uninsured losses sustained by New Jersey's fishing industry range from \$77–\$120 million. Recreational fishing-related industries – party/charter boat, bait and tackle shops and marinas – accounted for more than 80 percent of all losses.

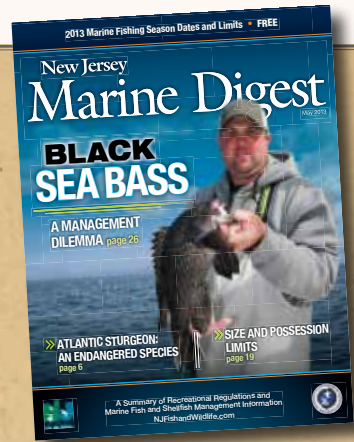
Fish and Wildlife's Marine Fisheries Administration staff played a very active role in providing information and working with the socioeconomic team from the National Marine Fisheries Service that conducted the initial economic assessment of damages and losses to New Jersey's fishing industries. In addition to supporting the National Marine Fisheries Service assessment, our Marine Fisheries Administration – thanks in part to the help of many constituent groups – is conducting its own comprehensive assessment and analysis of losses incurred by party/charter boats, bait and tackle shops/marinas, commercial fishermen, commercial fish dealers and shellfish aquaculture operations. Preliminary data suggest that uninsured losses may significantly exceed the National Marine Fisheries Service estimates.

Additional aid may find its way to the state through a bill introduced on April 9 by U.S. Congressman Frank Pallone Jr. Congressman Pallone's federal disaster relief bill would provide \$193 million for New Jersey and New York storm-related fisheries impacts with \$121 million of that money going to New Jersey.

The damage to the state's marine fishing industry is unquestionable. However, the rich diversity and abundance of our marine resource remains intact and fishing opportunities abound. Now more than ever, marine anglers need to continue – and even increase – their fishing trips to support and hasten the economic recovery of New Jersey's marine fishing industry.

I hope to see you on the water. 

Dave Chanda is the Director of the Division of Fish and Wildlife.



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The *Digest* is available at coastal license agents, bait and tackle shops and Fish and Wildlife offices. Information may be reprinted with permission. Subscriptions are not available.

This *Digest* is designed and produced by J.F. Griffin Publishing, LLC; www.jfgriffin.com.

Partial funding for the *Digest* is provided by the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Program.

Cover photo courtesy of Andrew Nichols and Kierran Broatch of TheConnecticutYankee.com

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New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

Our Mission

To protect and manage the state's fish and wildlife to maximize their long-term biological, recreational and economic value for all New Jerseyans.

Our Goals

- To maintain New Jersey's rich variety of fish and wildlife species at stable, healthy levels and to protect and enhance the many habitats on which they depend.
- To educate New Jerseyans on the values and needs of our fish and wildlife and to foster a positive human/wildlife co-existence.
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A man wearing a blue jacket, a cap, and sunglasses is holding a large Atlantic sturgeon. The fish is long and slender with a pointed snout and a dark collar around its neck. The background shows a body of water under a blue sky.

ATLANTIC STURGEON

ENDANGERED SPECIES

By Russ Allen, Supervising Fisheries Biologist

HAVE YOU EVER...


watched an Atlantic sturgeon spiral out of the water?

PERHAPS...

you discovered one washed up on a beach...

OR MAYBE...

you are among those who have never seen — or even heard of — these ancient aquatic creatures.



Fisheries biologist Russ Allen releases a tagged juvenile sturgeon during the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Delaware Bay Tagging Program.

This prehistoric fish has now been officially listed as an endangered species. What follows is a brief overview on the new federal Endangered Species Act regulations for Atlantic sturgeon (also potentially river herring and American eel in 2013) and how New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife will manage these species while in state waters. Our agency is also initiating a recreational outreach program to better educate anglers about potential interactions with endangered species and also how to maintain compliance with Endangered Species Act provisions. ■

Atlantic Sturgeon and the Endangered Species Act

Effective April 6, 2012, the National Marine Fisheries Service listed Atlantic sturgeon as endangered within most of its range, including the New York Bight which incorporates New Jersey State waters as well as all adjacent federal waters. For the Atlantic sturgeon listing, the New York Bight includes both the Hudson and Delaware watersheds.

The Endangered Species Act prohibits all "takes" (meaning to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, collect or an attempt to engage in any such conduct) of Atlantic sturgeon without proper federal permitting. Notice this broad definition of "take."

Although one usually thinks of the Endangered Species Act more severely affecting commercial fisheries — which it does in this case — recreational anglers must also heed this listing.

Immediately upon listing the Atlantic sturgeon, our agency began working with the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a formal *biological opinion* to preserve the functioning of our federally funded research programs (including key striped bass research) that might otherwise be adversely affected by listing sturgeon as endangered. This will allow New Jersey to have a specific number of takes of Atlantic sturgeon and sea turtles through December 2017 since our research surveys are addressed in the biological opinion.

The next priority was to develop a *habitat conservation plan* to cover recreational and commercial fishing activities in state waters. The plan includes information on New Jersey's fisheries and documents known information regarding interactions of endangered species. In addition, the plan describes methods for monitoring these fisheries and developing mitigation options for the future. Fish and Wildlife is close to finalizing our habitat conservation plan and will continue

to work with the National Marine Fisheries Service to determine specific take numbers for the affected fisheries.

Recreational Fisheries

Some may think that the recreational fishing community would not be concerned about sturgeon or their endangered status. However, the recent listing of Atlantic sturgeon makes it illegal to take *any* Atlantic sturgeon without having the proper take permits from the National Marine Fisheries Service. This means New Jersey must have a habitat conservation plan in place to ensure that any takes of Atlantic sturgeon are properly recorded and summarized for reporting purposes. Fish and Wildlife is currently working with the National Marine Fisheries Service to finalize our habitat conservation plan. Recreational outreach and reporting will likely be important elements of the habitat conservation plan.

Although the majority of recreational takes are in the form of a disturbance (a boat traveling across a sturgeon's path or an incidental catch while striper fishing), some incidents may be lethal such as when a propeller delivers a severe strike or when there is a gut-hooked fish. There are major differences in the type of take and how they are handled by the National Marine Fisheries Service during this permitting process. Obviously, lethal takes may require changes to regulations in a quick and responsive manner.

As of this writing, river herring (alewife and blueback herring) and American eel were also being considered for listing under the Endangered Species Act. These additional listings could bring a new dimension to how Fish and Wildlife deals with endangered or threatened species, especially when this could impact our important fisheries.

Our agency will continue to update anglers, as well as the general public, and to work within the framework of the Endangered Species Act to minimize impacts to New Jersey's angling community.

Motor Boat Registration and Title Requirements

NJ Motor Vehicle Commission (MVC)

Registration

Most boats must be registered to operate on New Jersey waterways.

- All titled boats must be registered also.
- **Any boat (including jet skis and non-titled watercraft), mechanically propelled (incl. electric motors), regardless of length, must be registered.**
- Boats greater than 12 feet in length, regardless of propulsion means, must be titled and registered at an MVC office.

Boats and marine equipment which **need not be** registered:

- Those not based in New Jersey or operating here less than 180 consecutive days that are operating under a federally approved numbering system from another state
- Ship's lifeboats
- Non-motorized vessels used exclusively on small lakes and ponds on private property
- Racing vessels with New Jersey State Marine Police permit
- Non-motorized inflatable device, surfboard, racing shell, dinghy, canoe or kayak
- Non-motorized vessel less than 12 feet in length

Title

For use on New Jersey waterways, all boats more than 12 feet in length must be titled, with the exception of ship's lifeboat, canoe, kayak, inflatable, surfboard, rowing scull, racing shell, tender/dinghy used for direct transportation between a vessel and shore for no other purposes.

Boat Operator License (MVC)

An operator license is required to operate power vessels on fresh, non-tidal waters such as lakes, creeks and rivers. (Minimum age 16 years; with certain exceptions.)

For More Information:

New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission
(888) 486-3339 toll free in NJ or
(609) 292-6500 from out-of-state
www.nj.gov/mvc/

Boat Safety Certificate (NJSP)

A boat safety certificate (from an **approved** boat safety course; see NJSP Web site, below) is required to operate a personal watercraft or power vessel, including electric motors, in NJ waters (tidal and non-tidal).

New Jersey State Police (NJSP)

(609) 882-2000
www.njsp.org/maritime

Implications and Outreach

So what does this mean to the average angler? Probably not much but the implications could be widespread should New Jersey be found out-of-compliance with the provisions of the Endangered Species Act.

For instance, striped bass anglers using clam during the spring run unfortunately catch a few sturgeon in Delaware Bay as they move to their spawning grounds in the Delaware River. Since the Delaware stock is at an extremely low level, any sturgeon mortality is considered as a critical detriment to the survival of the stock.

We are still in consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service to finalize our habitat conservation plan and determine the number of Atlantic sturgeon takes allowed for the recreational fishery. If New Jersey is allowed a low

number of takes and we exceed that allowance, immediately we must be in consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service. They may consider, for example, restrictions on using clam as bait or a requirement for circle hooks be discussed as potential future strategies to help mitigate sturgeon takes, if needed. However, no such restrictions would take place without angler input.


While this example of one type of impact and a hypothetical subsequent management action is somewhat exaggerated just to illustrate the process, the results are nonetheless possible.

Let this information serve as Fish and Wildlife's kickoff to a new outreach program for anglers to report interactions with Atlantic sturgeon. Whether the sturgeon is sighted, caught or washed up on a beach, our fisheries biologists want to know.



Dr. Dewayne Fox/Assoc. Prof. Delaware State Univ.

Commercial fishermen Captain Kevin Wark, left, and Mike Lohr show a juvenile sturgeon captured during a Cooperative Research Project.

A new, quick reporting link on our website (NJFishandWildlife.com) allows anglers and non-anglers to keep us informed of American sturgeon takes. Or notify us by calling our office at (609) 748-2020 during normal business hours, especially if a sturgeon has washed up from either an accidental or natural death. This crucial data is essential as we move forward under the provisions of the federal Endangered Species Act. In advance, thank you for your assistance by working together to enhance the angler experience. 

For additional information on Atlantic sturgeon, please visit www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/pdf/2005/digmar16-27.pdf

Captain Kevin Wark displays a large Atlantic sturgeon captured in the Atlantic Ocean for research.



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GOVERNOR'S SURF FISHING TOURNAMENT

By Karen Leskie, Senior Biologist

Get Outside and Enjoy a Day of Fishing with Family and Friends

The 22nd Annual Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament will be held Sunday, Oct. 6, 2013. Once again anglers from New Jersey and neighboring states will descend upon the beaches of Island Beach State Park in hopes of catching the longest fish of the day. The tournament aims to encourage youngsters and adults to learn more about surf fishing while taking advantage of a great family activity. Funds raised by the tournament go toward marine resource conservation and education.

Despite a rainy forecast, 550 anglers enjoyed a rain-free morning of fishing where more than 130 fish were caught in the bluefish, kingfish and blackfish categories. New Jersey Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno and Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bob Martin were on site to greet tournament participants and take part in the awards ceremony. A total of 19 prizes were awarded in categories for children, teen and adults. However, the grand

prize winner went to Bill Sheppard of Seaside Park, NJ with a 20 $\frac{3}{4}$ " bluefish. Mr. Sheppard received two rod-and-reel combinations, a \$100 gift card to Orvis (courtesy of World Fishing Network), a plaque, and will have his name engraved on the Governor's Cup, which is permanently on display at Island Beach State Park.

Since its inception in 1991, the tournament has generated more than \$130,000 for various marine education and restoration efforts, construction of access ramps for disabled saltwater anglers, surf fishing instruction programs and equipment, specialized wheel chairs that provide beach access to the disabled and elderly, plus the purchase of the first mobile automatic heart defibrillator for use at Island Beach State Park.

For more information about the Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament or to receive a registration form, visit NJFishandWildlife.com/gsft.htm or call (609) 748-4347. 

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife (along with our co-sponsors: New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry, New Jersey State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Jersey Coast Anglers Association and New Jersey Beach Buggy Association) would like to thank the following organizations for contributing to the success of the 21st Annual Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament in 2012:

- Canyon Gear
- Grumpy's Bait & Tackle
- Legal Limits Company
- Manns Bait Company
- O Mustad & Son, Inc.
- Sportsman's Center
- Surf Rocket
- World Fishing Network



In the Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament winner's circle: (Front row, left to right) — NJ State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs President Frank Virgilio, Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno, tournament winner Bill Sheppard and DEP Commissioner Bob Martin. Back row (left to right) — JCAA President Joseph Puntasecca and Tim Burden, NJ Beach Buggy Association.

Photos: Jamie Darrow/NJ Div. Fish and Wildlife

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From the office of takemefishing.org.

Do you need a fishing license and boat registration?

Please take a few moments to consider each of the questions below. Take your time. Let it come naturally.



DIRECTIONS

1. Use No. 2 pencil.
2. Do NOT use a No. 1 pencil.
3. We don't know why. Just don't.

1

Is this your idea of fishing with friends?

- A Yes, I am a 1,200-pound brown bear, and these are my friends.
- B Yes, I stand at the edge of the falls and catch fish with my mouth.
- C No.



2

Are you your own boat?

- A Yes, and please stop staring at my stern.
- B No, I'm my own airplane.
- C No.



3

Do you want this in your favorite lake?

- A Yes. Landfills are soooo cliché.
- B Sure, who doesn't love dipping their toes into a pool of swirling sewage?
- C No.



ANSWERS:

CONGRATULATIONS! You definitely need to be licensed and registered. Because funds generated from your fishing license and boat registration go toward conserving our waterways and providing better fishing and boating for generations to come.

Find out how to **do your part** at:



TAKEMEFISHING.org

This is not the full law. Consult the Division of Fish and Wildlife for further details. All persons are reminded that the statutes, code and regulations are the legal authorities.

Red text in regulations indicates a change for this year.

Green text denotes possible regulation changes anticipated to be in effect later in 2013.

Purple text indicates an important note.

Regulations remain in effect until changed. For the most current regulations, go to NJFishandWildlife.com/njregs.htm#marine or call the marine fish "listen-only" line at (609)292-2083. The Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish and Wildlife informs anglers that rules for the recreational harvest of **summer flounder (fluke)**, **black sea bass**, **American shad** and **lobster** have changed.

- The **summer flounder** recreational season is now **May 18–Sept. 16**. The recreational possession limit remains at five fish while the minimum size remains at 17.5 inches. **Note: The summer flounder season may change again in 2013.**
- **At press time, the recreational black sea bass regulations had not been determined. Regulations updates are anticipated in mid to late May.** Visit our Web site at NJFishandWildlife.com or call the 24-hour marine fish "listen-only" line at (609) 292-2083 for the latest regulation updates.
- Due to concerns regarding the decline of **American shad** stocks, the taking or possession of American shad in New Jersey's marine and tidal water is prohibited except for the Delaware Bay, Delaware River and its tributaries. The recreational possession limit in the Delaware Bay, Delaware River and its tributaries has been reduced from six fish to three fish with no minimum size or closed season.
- The Southern New England stock of **American lobster** has been at low levels of abundance and experiencing low recruitment. In an effort to reduce harvest and promote stock rebuilding, no one shall harvest or possess lobster from February 1 – March 31.

These changes were implemented for New Jersey to remain in compliance with the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's management plans for summer flounder, black sea bass, American shad and American lobster. The new rules are aimed at providing adequate protection to these fish stocks while allowing New Jersey's salt water recreational anglers to participate to the fullest extent possible in these various fisheries.

New Jersey recreational marine regulations apply to all fish species when they are possessed in state waters or landed in New Jersey regardless of where they are caught.

Resource Information

Anyone who takes fisheries resources may be required to provide information on the species, number, weight or other information pertinent to management of resources.

Methods of Recreational Fishing

No person shall take, catch, kill or attempt to take, catch or kill any fish within the marine waters of the state by any means except in the manner commonly known as angling with hand line or rod and line unless specifically provided for by statute or regulation.

Wanton Waste Prohibited

Fish of any species which are purposely killed shall become part of the angler's daily possession limit and shall not be returned to the water from which they were taken. This does not apply to fish which are released alive and subsequently die, but does apply even to species without size/possession limits.

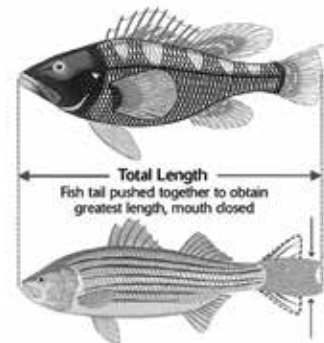
Spear Fishing

Spear fishing may be conducted by means of a spear, harpoon or other missile while completely submerged in the marine waters of the state for any species, except lobster.

Persons who fish with a spear for species with size limits are reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure the fish meets the minimum size limits before being killed or injured.

Fish Measurement

1. Lay fish flat on top of, or alongside a measuring rule, not measured over the body.



2. Fish are measured from the tip of the snout (mouth closed) to the longest part of the tail.

Prohibited Species

It is illegal to take, possess, land, purchase, or sell any of the following species:

- Atlantic sturgeon
- basking shark
- big eye sand tiger shark
- sand tiger shark
- shortnose sturgeon
- whale shark
- white shark
- river herring (alewife and blueback herring; see herring illustrations, page 16)
- See *Sharks* (page 14) for the full list of prohibited shark species

Sea Turtles & Marine Mammals

It is illegal to intentionally molest, kill or possess sea turtles or marine mammals, or to possess any part thereof.

Finfish

How to Release Hooked Fish

Proper handling and releasing techniques reduce fish mortality.

- Land fish as quickly as possible, except when retrieving from depths of 40-feet or more. Fighting a fish to exhaustion increases mortality as does rapidly bringing up a fish through the changing water pressure and temperature gradients.
- Keep fish to be released in the water as much as possible. Plan ahead with tools and camera.
- Minimize physical injury. Do not touch gills or allow fish to flop around on deck.
- Carefully remove hooks using a dehooker or needle-nose pliers.
- Use plain hooks, not stainless, to rust away quickly if one must be left in a gut-hooked fish. Be prepared with long-handled dykes. Cut this line close to the hook's eyelet.
- To bring a fish out of the water momentarily, use a neoprene net or one of knotless nylon. Handle the fish carefully using **wet** hands, wet cotton gloves or similar material to minimize loss of the fish's protective slime layer.
- To revive lethargic fish hold in a normal, upright position. Move the fish forward in an "S" or figure-8 pattern so that water flows over the gills only from front to back.
- Use circle hooks (not offset) for species that bite and flee, such as striped bass, weakfish or sea bass. Consider pinching hook barbs.

Filleting

The filleting at sea of all fish with a size limit, or **any species of flatfish**, is prohibited except for summer flounder; see *Summer Flounder*, page 14. No parts of any fish caught on a previous fishing trip shall be in possession. Party boats may fillet fish at sea if they obtain a Special Fillet Permit. Applications may be obtained from Fish and Wildlife's Bureau of Marine Fisheries.

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Black Sea Bass

Black sea bass are measured along the midline from the snout to the end of the central portion of the tail, not to include the tail filaments. (See fish measuring example on page 12.) At press time, the recreational black sea bass regulations had not been determined. Regulations updates are anticipated in mid to late May. Visit our Web site at NJFishandWildlife.com or call the 24-hour marine fish “listen-only” line at (609) 292-2083 for the latest regulation updates.

Bluefish

The possession limit for bluefish is 15 fish.

Black Drum

The minimum size limit for black drum is 16 inches in total length and the daily possession limit is three fish. There is no closed season for black drum.

Visit our Web site at NJFishandWildlife.com or call the 24-hour marine fish “listen-only” line at (609) 292-2083 for the latest regulation updates.

River Herring

The taking or possession of any river herring (alewife and blueback herring) in New Jersey’s marine, tidal and freshwaters is prohibited. This prohibition does not include Atlantic herring which may be retained and used as bait. See the fish ID illustrations on page 16 for herring species identification.

Red Drum

The red drum possession and size limits are one fish no less than 18 inches and not greater than 27 inches.

Striped Bass (includes Hybrid Striped Bass)

The possession limit for striped bass/hybrid striped bass is two fish with a minimum size limit of 28 inches for each fish. Anglers participating in the Striped Bass Bonus Program may possess an additional striped bass at least 28 inches in length.

It is illegal to take, catch or kill any striped bass from or in any marine waters of this state, by means of a net of any description, or by any methods other than angling with a hook and line or by spear fishing.

It is illegal to possess any striped bass which is less than the legal minimum size of 28 inches.

Harvest and possession of striped bass from federal waters (outside three miles) is prohibited.

Sale of striped bass in New Jersey is prohibited.

Striped Bass Closed Seasons

No person may take, attempt to take, or have in possession any striped bass from the following closed waters:

Jan. 1–Feb. 28: All waters closed except the Atlantic Ocean from zero to three miles offshore. All inlets and bays are delineated from ocean waters by a Colregs Demarcation line.

April 1–May 31: Delaware River and Bay and their tributaries closed from the upstream side of the Calhoun St. bridge downstream to and including the Salem River and its tributaries.

Note: Non-offset circle hooks are required to reduce striped bass bycatch mortality while fishing with natural bait during the striped bass springtime spawning area closure within the Delaware River and its tributaries. This restriction does not apply to hook sizes smaller than size 2.

Red text in regulations indicates a change for this year.
Green text denotes possible regulation changes anticipated to be in effect later in 2013.
Purple text indicates an important note.

Striped Bass Bonus Program

The Striped Bass Bonus Program will continue this year, where anglers possessing a bonus permit may keep a third striper at 28 inches or greater.

The current allocation from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is 321,750 pounds. Should New Jersey exceed this quota, any overage would be subtracted from the following year's quota.

Application Process: Striped Bass Bonus Program permits are only available online. Go to www.NJ.WildlifeLicense.com to complete the application and immediately print one Bonus Permit (application fee, \$2). The permit is non-transferable and valid for the current calendar year. Only one permit can be used per day. Harvest reporting also must be online.

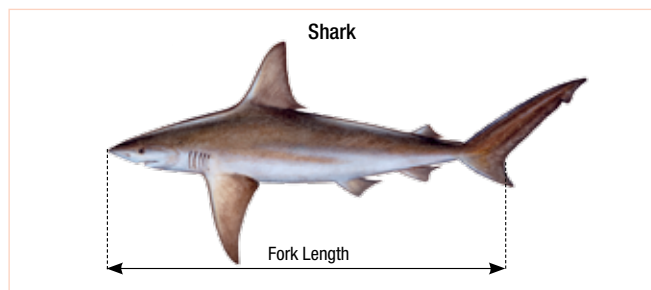
Striped Bass Bonus Permit Harvest Reporting: All information on the Bonus Permit must be completed immediately after harvest and prior to transportation. After reporting harvest information at www.NJ.WildlifeLicense.com, anglers are then eligible to receive another bonus permit for the \$2 application fee.

Note: Harvest information must be reported online.

Striped bass anglers are encouraged to report *all* fishing activity after each trip. Visit Fish and Wildlife's Volunteer Angler Survey at NJFishandWildlife.com/marinesurvey.htm.

Sharks

The minimum size limit for any species of shark, except small coastal group and dogfish is 54 inches fork length. See dogfish *Note* and measuring illustration for fork length below.



The 2013 shark regulations complement existing federal shark regulations (see 2013 *Federal Recreational Regulations* table, page 20). However, the following additional measures are required for state waters:

- In state waters, there is no minimum size limit for small coastal sharks* in the recreational fishery, but federal regulations include a 54-inch minimum size limit for blacknose and finetooth small coastal sharks.
- All sharks within the large coastal group* will have a closed season within state waters from May 15 through July 15 to protect spawning female sharks during the pupping season.

* See page 20 footnote for species list defining small coastal, large coastal and pelagic sharks.

All sharks harvested by recreational fishermen must have heads, tails and fins attached naturally to the carcass until landed. Anglers may still gut and bleed the carcass as long as the tail is not removed. Filleting sharks at sea is prohibited.

Recreational anglers should access the following National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Web site, http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/sharks/2008/Rec_shark_ID_placard.pdf to view the publication *Sharks That Can Be Legally Retained By Recreational Anglers In The Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea And Gulf Of Mexico*, an excellent pictorial guide to identifying sharks that are legal to harvest.

These shark species are prohibited from possession: Atlantic angel, basking, bigeye sixgill, bigeye thresher, bigeye tiger, bignose, Caribbean reef, Caribbean sharpnose, dusky, Galapagos, longfin mako, narrowtooth, night, sandbar, sandtiger, sevengill, silky, sixgill, smalltail, whale and white sharks.

Note: To differentiate sharks from dogfish—the smooth dogfish has flat, tiny teeth; the spiny dogfish has strong, dorsal spines, shorter than, and in front of, the dorsal fins. Neither are present in sharks.

Summer Flounder (Fluke)

The possession and minimum size limit for summer flounder is five fish at 17.5 inches with an open season from **May 18–Sept. 16**. **Note:** The recreational summer flounder regulations may change again in 2013.

Anglers may fillet one legal-sized summer flounder from their daily possession limit catch for use as bait. This carcass, commonly known as the rack, shall be kept intact so it can be measured for compliance with the minimum size limit. No parts of any summer flounder caught on a previous fishing trip shall be in possession; only fish just caught on this outing.

Tautog (Blackfish)

The minimum size limit for tautog is 15 inches. There is a four fish possession limit from Jan. 1–Feb. 28, a zero fish possession limit with a closed season from March 1–March 31, a four fish possession limit from April 1–April 30, a zero fish possession limit with a closed season from May 1–July 16, a one fish possession limit from July 17–Nov. 15, and a six fish possession limit from Nov. 16–Dec. 31.

Weakfish (Gray & Spotted Seatrout)

The current possession and minimum size limit for weakfish is one fish at least 13 inches in length.

Winter Flounder

The possession minimum and size limit for winter flounder is two fish at 12 inches. For winter flounder the open season is March 23–May 21.

Additional Marine Fishing Regulations

See pages 16–17 for the fish ID pages and pages 19–20 for the regulation charts.

Delaware Fishing License Requirement

A Delaware fishing license is now required for all non-resident anglers aged 16 and over fishing either fresh or tidal waters. Delaware fishing license information can be found at <http://www.fw.delaware.gov/Fisheries/Pages/NewFishingLicense.aspx>.

New York License Requirement

New York's marine fishing license requirement has been suspended. New York is offering a free registry to all marine anglers. Visit <http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/54950.html>.

Bait Fish

No license is required for the taking of baitfish for personal use with the following gear:

1. Dip nets 24 inches diameter or less for the taking of herring (excluding river herring – alewife and blueback herring) for live bait.
2. Bait seines 50 feet long or less.
3. Cast nets 20 feet in diameter or less.
4. Lift or umbrella nets four feet square or less.
5. Not more than five killipots.
6. Not more than two miniature fykes or pots for the taking of eels for bait.

The taking or possession of river herring is prohibited.

Fish taken in this manner may not be sold or used for barter unless a commercial bait net license is in possession.

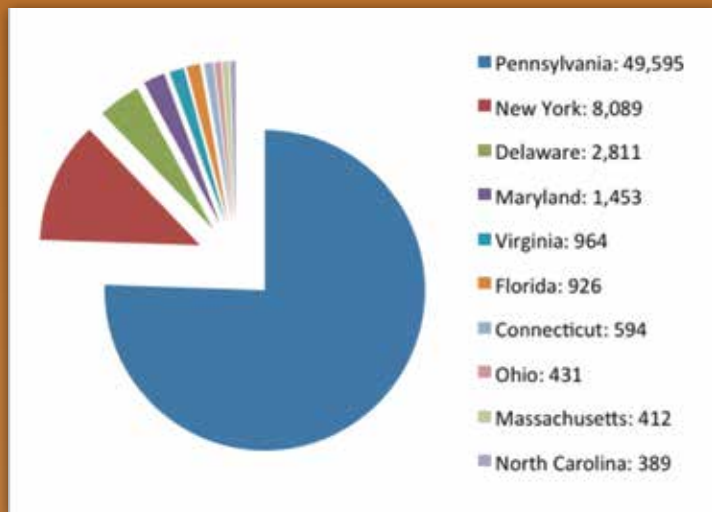
No person shall take or attempt to take fish by any means from the Deal Lake flume, Lake Takanasse spillway or Wreck Pond spillway on any Monday, Wednesday or Friday during the months of April and May.

▶▶ NEW JERSEY SALTWATER RECREATIONAL REGISTRY PROGRAM (NJSRRP)

REGISTER.
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In 2012, the New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry Program had 265,593 individual registrants; just over 74% (196,849) were New Jersey residents. Individuals registered from all 50 U.S. states, two U.S. territories and 41 other countries. The pie chart below shows the 10 states with the greatest number of participants in the NJSRRP, after New Jersey.

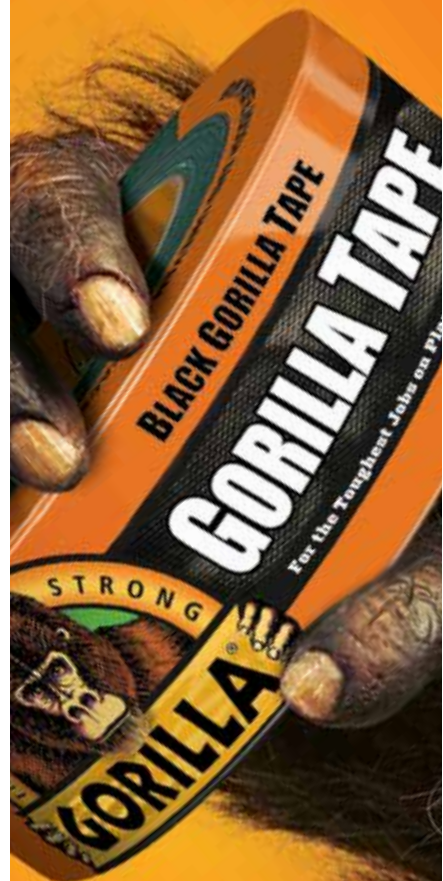


Anglers are reminded that registrations expire at the end of each calendar year and **must be renewed annually**. For more information on the New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry Program and to register, visit www.SaltwaterRegistry.NJ.gov.

For more information about the national overhaul of the recreational data collection survey and how the registry database information will be used, visit the website www.CountMyFish.noaa.gov.

Compiled by Maryellen Gordon, Assistant Fisheries Biologist.

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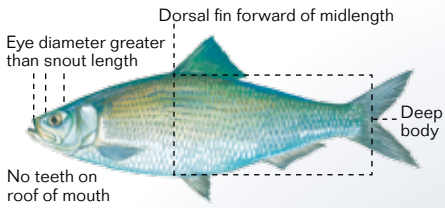
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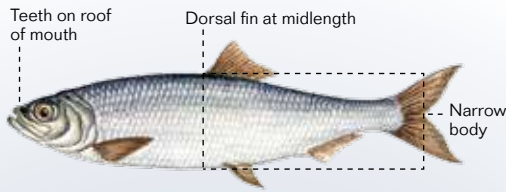


Ray Ringen

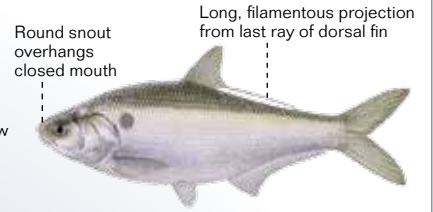
Herring



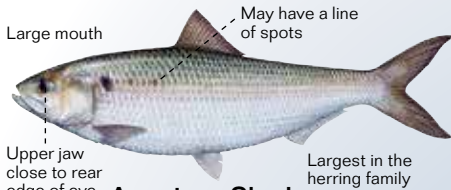
Alewife (a river herring)



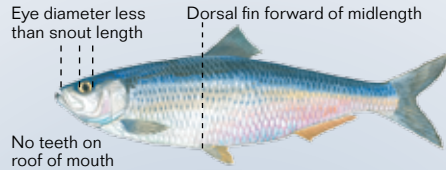
Atlantic Herring



Gizzard Shad



American Shad



Blueback Herring (a river herring)



Hickory Shad

Alewife, American Shad, Blueback Herring and Hickory Shad illustrations ©Duane Raver; Atlantic Herring illustration ©Victor Young/NH. Fish and Game Department; Gizzard Shad illustration courtesy of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department ©2012.



Striped Bass



Weakfish



Bluefish



Black Sea Bass



Atlantic Croaker



Winter Flounder



Tautog



Black Drum



Summer Flounder (Fluke)



Red Drum



Blue Crab



Hard Clam



Spot



**Scup
(Porgy)**



White Perch



Northern Searobin



**Northern
Kingfish**



Atlantic Bonito



Northern Puffer



**Spanish
Mackerel**



Oyster Toadfish



Atlantic Mackerel



Atlantic Cod



Smooth Dogfish



Spiny Dogfish



Sand Tiger Shark



Sandbar Shark

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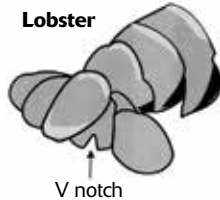
Crustaceans

American Lobster

The legal possession size of whole lobsters, measured from the rear of the eye socket along a line parallel to the center line of the body shell to the rear of the body shell, shall be not less than 3 3/8 inches nor greater than 5 1/4 inches. Lobster parts may not be possessed at sea or landed. **There is no harvest or possession of lobster from Feb. 1 – March 31.**

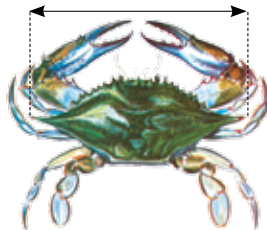
The possession limit is six lobsters per person. No person shall possess any lobster with eggs attached or from which eggs have been removed or any female lobster with a v-notched tail, as illustrated above.

The use of spears, gigs, gaffs or other penetrating devices as a method of capture for lobsters is prohibited. A recreational lobster pot permit and fish pot license is required to use pots or traps to capture lobsters. For details call (609) 748-2020. Lobsters taken recreationally may not be sold or offered for sale.



Crabs

- Crabs may be taken recreationally with hand lines, manually operated collapsible traps or scoop nets without a license. A non-commercial crab pot license is required for the use of not more than two non-collapsible Chesapeake-style crab pots (see illustration on page 21) or two trot lines to harvest crabs. See page 21 for the non-commercial crab pot license information.
- It is illegal to harvest or possess more than one bushel of crabs per day per person or offer for sale any crabs without having in your possession a valid commercial crabbing license.
- Minimum size for crabs that may be harvested (measured from point to point of shell) are as follows:
 - Peeler or shedder crab: 3 inches
 - Soft crab: 3 1/2 inches
 - Hard crab: 4 1/2 inches (possession)
- All female crabs with eggs attached and all undersized crabs shall be returned to the water immediately.
- Recreational trot lines shall not exceed 150 feet in length with a maximum of 25 baits.
- All pots and trot lines shall be marked with the identification number of the owner.
- All crab pots must be tended at least once every 72 hours.
- No floating line may be used on any crab pot or crab pot buoy.
- No crab pot shall be placed in any area that would obstruct or impede navigation or in any creek less than 50 feet wide.
- Only the owner, his agent or a law enforcement officer may raise or remove contents of a legally set fishing device.
- Crabs taken with a bait seine may be retained for personal use only if the fisherman possesses a bait net license, and may not be bartered or sold unless the fisherman possesses a commercial crab license.
- No crabs may be harvested from the Newark Bay Complex. For more information, see *Health Advisory* on page 28.



Measure crabs point to point.

13. Crab Pot/Trot Line seasons:

Delaware Bay and tributaries: April 6–Dec. 4
 All other waters: March 15–Nov. 30

The following waters, **and their tributaries**, are closed to the use of crab pots and trot lines: Cumberland Co.: Cohansy River and creeks named Back, Cedar, Nantuxent, Fortescue, Oranoken and Dividing; Cape May Co.: West and Bidwell Creeks and the Cape May Canal; Atlantic Co.: Hammock Cove (Dry Bay); Ocean Co.: on east shore of Barnegat Bay, that area of Sedge Islands Wildlife Management Area enclosed by a line drawn from the northern bank of Fishing Creek on Island Beach State Park to the northern tip of the Sedge Islands (Hensler Island), then south from point to point along the western side of the Sedge Islands WMA and terminating on the most southwestern point of Island Beach State Park.

- Fish and Wildlife will issue a non-commercial crab dredge license for the harvest of not more than one bushel of crabs per day during the crab dredge season. Crabs so taken may not be sold or offered for barter. There is a fee of \$15 for this non-commercial crab dredge license. See page 21 for details on purchasing a non-commercial crab dredge license.

Notice: All non-collapsible Chesapeake-style crab pots (see illustration on page 21) must be constructed to include a biodegradable panel designed to create an opening to allow crabs and other organisms to escape if the pot is lost or abandoned. All non-collapsible Chesapeake-style crab pots set in any manmade lagoon or any water body less than 150 feet wide must also include a turtle excluder device inside all pot entrance funnels.

Horseshoe Crabs

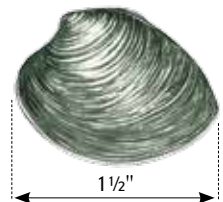
The harvest of horseshoe crabs is prohibited. Possession of horseshoe crabs is also prohibited except for those individuals holding a scientific collecting permit for research and education and those fishermen that can provide suitable documentation that the horseshoe crabs in their possession were harvested outside of New Jersey.

Mollusks

- All persons must be licensed to harvest any shellfish. See license information, page 21. Shellfish means any species of benthic mollusks (except conch) including hard and soft clams, oysters, surf clams, bay scallops and mussels.
- It is illegal to harvest shellfish from condemned waters, even for bait purposes. It is also illegal to harvest shellfish including surf clams from beaches adjacent to water classified as condemned. Shellfish water classification charts are available from license agents or any state shellfish office. See page 21 for shellfish license information. Charts are updated annually.
- Shellfish harvesting is prohibited before sunrise and after sunset. Shellfish harvest is also prohibited on Sundays except in the seasonally approved areas of the Navesink and Shrewsbury rivers, when harvesting is permitted between Nov. 1 and April 30.
- Harvesting shellfish on public grounds is restricted to the use of hand implements.
- It is illegal to harvest shellfish from leased grounds. These grounds are delineated by stakes or buoys set by the lease holder. Charts of the leases may be examined at Fish and Wildlife's Nacote Creek or Delaware Bay shellfish offices during regular business hours. Invasion onto leased grounds is punishable by penalties up to \$3,000 and loss of all equipment.

Recreational Shellfishing


- No holder of any recreational shellfish license may take more than a total of 150 shellfish (in aggregate) per day. See *Shellfish License Information*, page 21.
- It is illegal to dredge shellfish on public grounds. Here, hand implements are the only legal harvest methods.
- The minimum size of hard clams that may be harvested is 1 1/2 inches in length. Clams less than 1 1/2 inches in length must immediately be returned



to the bottom from which they were taken. Specific seasons, regulations and size limits exist for oyster beds in Great Bay, Delaware Bay, plus the Mullica, Great Egg Harbor and Tuckahoe rivers. Check with the nearest shellfish office (Nacote Creek or Delaware Bay) for these detailed regulations.

- Shells taken in the process of harvesting oysters must be culled from the live oysters and returned immediately to the area from where they were taken.

Commercial Shellfishing

- Shellfish may be sold only to certified dealers. All persons selling shellfish commercially must tag each container listing date of harvest, name and address of the harvester and the waters from which the shellfish were harvested.
- It is illegal to dredge shellfish on public grounds. All harvesting on public grounds is restricted to the use of hand implements.
- Shells taken in the process of harvesting oysters must be culled from the live oysters and immediately returned to the area from where they were taken.
- The minimum size of hard clams that may be harvested is 1½ inches in length. Clams less than 1½ inches must immediately be returned to the bottom from which they were taken. Specific seasons, regulations and size limits exist for oyster beds in Great Bay, Delaware Bay, plus the Mullica, Great Egg Harbor, and Tuckahoe rivers. Check with the nearest shellfish office (Nacote Creek or Delaware Bay) for these detailed regulations.
- It is illegal to harvest shellfish on Sunday except in the seasonal waters of the Navesink and Shrewsbury rivers between Nov. 1 and April 30 when it is legal. 

2013 New Jersey Recreational Fishing Seasons, Minimum Size and Possession Limits

Regulations remain in effect until changed.

For the most current regulations, go to NJFishandWildlife.com or call the marine fish "listen-only" line at (609) 292-2083. Regulations in **red** are new this year. See page 12 for how to measure fish.

| Species | Open Season | Minimum Length | Harvest & Possession Limit (per person unless noted) |
|---|---|-----------------|--|
| American Eel | No Closed Season | 6" | 50 |
| Black Drum | No Closed Season | 16" | 3 |
| Black Sea Bass ^a | Jan. 1–Feb. 28 | 12.5** | 15 |
| | May 19–TBD | TBD | TBD |
| Bluefish | No Closed Season | None | 15 |
| Cobia | No Closed Season | 37" | 2 |
| Cod | No Closed Season | 21" | No Limit |
| Haddock | No Closed Season | 21" | No Limit |
| King Mackerel | No Closed Season | 23" | 3 |
| Pollock | No Closed Season | 19" | No Limit |
| Red Drum | No Closed Season | 18" | 1 not greater than 27" |
| River Herring | No Open Season | None | 0 |
| Scup (Porgy) | Jan. 1–Feb. 28 July 1–Dec. 31 | 9" | 50 |
| Shad | | | |
| Delaware River & tributaries | No Closed Season | None | 6 (maximum of 3 American shad) |
| All Other Marine Waters | No Closed Season | None | 6 (no American shad may be harvested or possessed) |
| Shark^{b,c} | | | |
| Large coastal group [†] | Jan. 1–May 14 July 16–Dec. 31 | 54" fork length | One Shark (of any species, except prohibited species) per vessel per trip; plus one Atlantic sharpnose shark per person per trip (no minimum size); plus one bonnethead shark per person per trip (no minimum size). |
| Small coastal group [†] | No closed season | None | |
| Pelagic group [†] | No closed season | 54" fork length | |
| Smooth Dogfish | No Closed Season | None | No Limit |
| Spanish Mackerel | No Closed Season | 14" | 10 |
| Striped Bass or Hybrid Striped Bass | | | |
| Delaware River & tributaries** (Calhoun St. bridge to Salem River & tributaries) | March 1–March 31 and June 1–Dec. 31 | 28" | 2 |
| Delaware River & tributaries** (upstream of Calhoun St. bridge) | March 1–Dec. 31 | | |
| Atlantic Ocean ^d (0–3 nautical miles from shore) | No Closed Season | | |
| Rivers, bay and estuaries | March 1–Dec. 31 | – | 0 |
| 3–200 nautical miles (federal waters) | Prohibited | | |
| Summer Flounder ^a | May 18–Sept. 16 | 17.5" | 5 |
| Tautog | Jan. 1–Feb. 28 | 15" | 4 |
| | April 1–April 30 | 15" | 4 |
| | July 17–Nov. 15 | 15" | 1 |
| | Nov. 16–Dec. 31 | 15" | 6 |
| Weakfish | No Closed Season | 13" | 1 |
| Winter Flounder | March 23–May 21 | 12" | 2 |
| Note: No species of fish with a minimum size limit listed above may be filleted or cleaned at sea. Party boats licensed to carry 15 or more passengers may apply for a permit to fillet the above species. See <i>Summer Flounder</i> , page 14. | | | |
| Blue Crab | | | |
| peeler or shedder | No Closed Season* | 3" | 1 bushel |
| soft | No Closed Season* | 3½" | |
| hard | No Closed Season* | 4½" | |
| Lobster (carapace length) | Jan. 1–Jan. 31; April 1–Dec 31 | 3¾" | 6 |
| Hard Clam (license required) | No Closed Season | 1½" | 150 clams |

^a Regulation changes possible during 2013.

^b Not including dogfish; see description on page 14 under *Sharks*.

^c See page 12 for a list of *Prohibited Species*.

^d Atlantic Ocean greater than three miles from shore: harvest and possession prohibited.

^e Unless using non-collapsible, Chesapeake-style crab pots. See sections on crab pots, pages 18 and 21.

* Excluding tail filaments. (See illustration, page 12.)

** See *Closed Seasons* (page 13) for specifics of springtime non-offset circle hook requirements.

† See page 20 for *Federal Recreational Regulations*.

Law and Regulation Information

Contact a New Jersey Division of Fish & Wildlife Law Enforcement office that serves the county where you hunt or fish.



- **Northern Region** — (908) 735-8240 (Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, Union and Warren counties)
- **Central Region** — (609) 259-2120 (Burlington, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth and Ocean counties)
- **Southern Region** — (856) 629-0555 (Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem counties)
- **Marine Region** — (609) 748-2050 (coastal and bay areas)
- **To report violations anonymously call Operation Game Thief** — (855) OGT-TIPS

Red text in regulations indicates a change for this year.
Green text denotes possible regulation changes anticipated to be in effect later in 2013.
Purple text indicates an important note.

2013 Federal Recreational Regulations for Minimum Size, Possession Limits and Seasons

See page 12 for how to measure fish. See *Recreational Minimum Size, Possession Limits and Seasons* (page 19) for state waters listings of species not included in these federal waters regulations (from 3–200nm). For federal regulation questions, please contact the National Marine Fisheries Service at (978) 281-9260, or go to www.nmfs.noaa.gov.

| Species | Season | Minimum Size | Possession Limit (number per angler per day unless otherwise specified) | Notes |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| Cod | Year round | 22" | 10 per person per day | For more information go to www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/regs/ |
| Striped Bass | NA | NA | No possession allowed in EEZ | Possession prohibited in federal waters (3–200 nm). See pages 13 and 19 for NJ waters. |
| Dolphin (Mahi mahi) | Year round | None | 10 per day, not to exceed 60 per vessel, which ever is less — except on a charter or headboat, then 10 per paying passenger. | For current federal waters regulations (3–200nm), refer to www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/ or call (727) 824-5399. |
| Marlin, White | Year round | 66" lower jaw–fork length | None | Billfish require Highly Migratory Species (HMS) permit when fishing in federal waters (3–200 nm). For permits refer to www.hmspermits.gov or call (888) 872-8862. |
| Marlin, Blue | Year round | 99" lower jaw–fork length | None | During any sanctioned billfish tournaments offering prize money, non-offset circle hooks are required for lures with natural bait or natural/artificial bait combos. |
| Roundscale Spearfish | Year round | 66" lower jaw–fork length | None | All non-tournament billfish landings must be reported to NMFS within 24 hours, either online at www.hmspermits.gov or by calling (800) 894-5528. |
| Sailfish | Year round | 63" lower jaw–fork length | None | |
| Spearfish, Longbill | None | None | Prohibited | For current regulations refer to www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/ or call (727) 824-5399. |
| Golden Tilefish | Year round | None | 8 per angler per day | In effect from the Virginia/North Carolina border north. |
| Swordfish | Year round | 47" lower jaw–fork length if the head is naturally attached or 29" cleithrum to caudal keel if the head has been removed. | For anglers: 1 per person, no more than 4 per vessel per trip. For charter vessels: 1 per paying passenger, no more than 6 per vessel per trip. For headboat vessels: 1 per paying passenger, no more than 15 per vessel per trip. | Swordfish, tuna and sharks require an HMS permit when fishing in federal waters (3–200 nm). For permits, refer to www.hmspermits.gov or call (888) 872-8862. All non-tournament swordfish landings must be reported to NMFS within 24 hours either online at www.hmspermits.gov or by calling (800) 894-5528. |
| Tuna, Albacore (Longfin) | Year round | None | None | |
| Tuna, Bigeye | Year round | 27" curved fork length | None | |
| Tuna, Bluefin[†] | January 1, 2013 to December 31, 2013 or until season is closed. | <27" curved fork length >27" to <73" curved fork length | Prohibited Limits can change during the season. Prior to departure, check www.hmspermits.gov or 888-USA-TUNA for up-to-date limits. | † Bluefin tuna are managed in two regions; Northern, extending north from the Great Egg Inlet and Southern extending south from Great Egg Inlet. Bluefin tuna retention limits may change throughout the season. Visit www.hmspermits.gov or call (888) 872-8862 or (978) 281-9260 for current information. All recreational bluefin tuna landings must be reported to NMFS within 24 hours either online at www.hmspermits.gov or by calling (888) 872-8862. For current federal waters regulations (3–200nm), refer to www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/ or call (301) 713-2347 for swordfish/sharks or (978) 281-9260 for tunas. |
| Tuna, Skipjack | Year round | None | None | |
| Tuna, Yellowfin | Year round | 27" curved fork length | 3 per person per trip | |
| Sharks*, other than spiny or smooth dogfish | Year round | 54" fork length for authorized species* except no minimum size for Atlantic sharpnose or bonnethead sharks | For non prohibited species: 1 authorized* shark/vessel/trip plus 1 Atlantic sharpnose and 1 bonnethead shark/person/trip | See below for list of shark groups which MAY be kept or MUST be released. Swordfish, tuna and sharks require an HMS permit when fishing in federal waters (3–200 nm). For permits, refer to www.hmspermits.gov or call (888) 872-8862. Recreational fishermen (those that do not have a limited access commercial shark permit) can not sell, barter or trade any Atlantic shark or shark pieces. |
| Wahoo | Year round | None | 2 per person per day | For more information, contact the South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council at (727) 824-5326. |
| Wreckfish | None | None | Prohibited | |

***Shark Species That May Be Kept (Authorized Species):** Large Coastal Shark—blacktip, bull, lemon, nurse, tiger, spinner, scalloped hammerhead, smooth hammerhead, great hammerhead; Small Coastal Shark—Atlantic sharpnose, bonnethead, blacknose, finetooth; Pelagic Shark—Shortfin mako, blue, porbeagle, oceanic whitetip and common thresher. **Shark Species That MUST Be Released (Prohibited Species):** Atlantic angel, basking, bigeye sand tiger, bigeye sixgill, bigeye thresher, bignose, Caribbean reef, Caribbean sharpnose, dusky, Galapagos, longfin mako, narrowtooth, night, sandbar, sand tiger, sevengill, silky, sixgill, smalltail, whale and white.

Regulations concerning highly migratory species (HMS) such as tuna, swordfish, shark and billfish, are subject to change. Refer to www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/ for a list of complete federal regulations for highly migratory species. For questions/clarification of the federal highly migratory species regulations, contact the National Marine Fisheries Service at (301) 713-2347 or go to www.nmfs.noaa.gov.

SHELLFISH LICENSE INFORMATION

A clamming license is now called a shellfish license and is required for harvesting of all species of benthic mollusks (with the exception of conchs, addressed in the commercial marine fisheries regulations), including, but not limited to, hard and soft clams, surf clams, oysters, bay scallops and mussels. Other specific commercial shellfish licenses exist such as surf clam dredge, Delaware Bay oyster dredge boat, and Delaware Bay licenses to harvest in Areas 1, 2 and 3.

Anyone engaged in any shellfish harvesting activity with someone holding a commercial shellfish license must also possess their own commercial shellfish license.

The senior shellfish license is a lifetime license.

For shellfishing regulations, see pages 18–19. Prior to harvesting any shellfish, be certain to consult the Shellfish Growing Water Classification Charts published by DEP's Bureau of Marine Water Monitoring, available at any shellfish license agent, state shellfish offices, online at <http://www.nj.gov/dep/bmw/waterclass.htm> or call the Bureau of Marine Water Monitoring at (609) 748-2000. Shellfish licenses are available for purchase online at www.NJ.WildlifeLicense.com.

Shellfish License Fees

- **Resident recreational shellfish:** \$10
Harvest limit of 150 shellfish (in aggregate) per day. Sale of catch prohibited.
- **Non-resident recreational shellfish:** \$20
Harvest limit of 150 shellfish (in aggregate) per day. Sale of catch prohibited. License valid only during the months of June, July, August and September.
- **Juvenile recreational shellfish:** \$2
For persons under 14 years of age. Subject to same restrictions as resident or nonresident adult recreational license holders.
- **Resident commercial shellfish:** \$50
Unlimited harvest. Shellfish may be sold only to certified dealers.
- **Non-resident Commercial Shellfish:** \$250
Unlimited harvest. Shellfish may be sold to certified dealers only.
- **Senior citizen recreational shellfish license:** FREE (\$2 application fee)
NJ residents age 62 years or older. Harvest limit, 150 shellfish (in aggregate) per day. Sale of shellfish prohibited.
- **Disabled veterans:** Fish and Wildlife-certified disabled veterans are eligible for free shellfish license at any shellfish license agent location. For more information on how to become certified, call (908) 637-4125.

Crab Pot License Information

Crab Pot licenses are available at all agent locations:

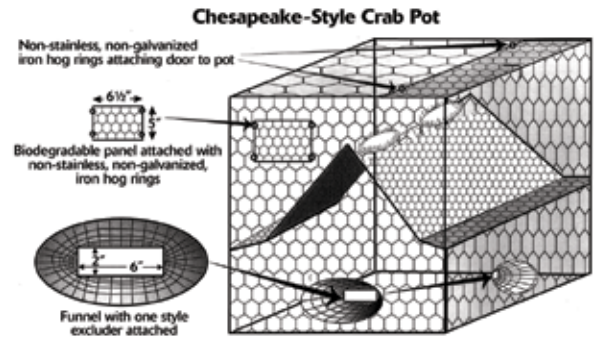
Recreational Crab Pot/Trot Line Licenses and Non-Commercial Crab Dredge Licenses are available for purchase online at: www.NJ.WildlifeLicense.com or at any Fish and Wildlife-certified license agent including those license agents listed at right. For the most current list of Fish and Wildlife-certified license agents, go to NJFishandWildlife.com/agentlst.htm.


- **Recreational crab pot/trot line license:** \$2
Harvest limit of one bushel per day. Refer to the shellfish regulations on page 18 for all recreational crabbing regulations.
- **Non-commercial crab dredge license:** \$15
Harvest limit of one bushel per day during the crab dredge season. Refer to the crab regulations on page 18 for all recreational crabbing regulations.

TERRAPIN EXCLUDERS AND BIODEGRADABLE PANELS ARE REQUIRED ON CHESAPEAKE-STYLE CRAB POTS

Users of non-collapsible, Chesapeake-style crab pots should be aware that all pots set in any body of water less than 150-feet wide at mean low tide or in any manmade lagoon MUST include diamondback terrapin excluder devices. In addition, all non-collapsible, Chesapeake-style crab pots set in any body of water MUST include biodegradable panels.

These crab pot modifications will help reduce the unintentional drowning of terrapins and allow for escapement of these and other species in the event that pots are lost or abandoned. Terrapin excluder devices must be no larger than 2-inch high by 6-inch wide and securely fastened inside each funnel



entrance. Biodegradable panels must measure at least 6½-inch wide by 5-inch high and be located in the upper section of the crab pot. The panel must be constructed of, or fastened to the pot with wood lath, cotton, hemp, sisal or jute twine not greater than 3/16" diameter, or non-stainless steel, uncoated ferrous metal not greater than 3/32" diameter. The door or a side of the pot may serve as the biodegradable panel ONLY if it is fastened to the pot with any of the material specified above. Crabbers should be aware that ALL non-collapsible, Chesapeake-style crab pots MUST be licensed and marked with the gear identification number of the owner. For crab pot license information and regulations, see the regulations on page 18 and license agents below. 

SHELLFISH AND NON-COMMERCIAL CRAB POT LICENSE AGENTS (For over-the-counter sales only)

ATLANTIC COUNTY

Egg Harbor True Value, 208 N. Philadelphia Ave., Egg Harbor City... (609) 965-0815
Fish Finder Marina, 3645 Atlantic-Brigantine Blvd., Brigantine... (609) 457-5384
NJ Div. Fish and Wildlife, 360 Rt. 9 N (milepost 51), Port Republic... (609) 748-2021
Zeus Sporting Goods, 6679 Black Horse Pike, Egg Harbor Twp... (609) 646-1668

CAMDEN COUNTY

Towne News, 81 So. Whitehorse Pike, Berlin... (856) 768-9132

CAPE MAY COUNTY

Avalon Hodge Podge, 2389 Ocean Dr., Avalon... (609) 967-3274
Belleplain Supply, 346 Handsmill Rd., Belleplain... (609) 861-2345
Budd's Bait & Tackle, 109 Fullingmill Rd., Villas... (609) 886-6935
City of Ocean City, 861 Asbury Ave., Ocean City... (609) 525-9328
Just Sports, 21 Mechanic St., Cape May Court House... (609) 465-6171
Sea Isle Bait & Tackle, 4200 Park Rd., Sea Isle City... (609) 263-6540
Smuggler's Cove, 370 83rd St., Stone Harbor... (609) 368-1700
Sterling Harbor Bait & Tackle, 1020 W. Rio Grande Ave., Wildwood... (609) 729-1425
Two Chums Bait, Tackle and Boat, 375 - 43rd Pl., Sea Isle City... (609) 263-2486
Upper Township, 2100 Tuckahoe Rd., Tuckahoe... (609) 628-2805
Wal*Mart, 3159 Rt. 9S, Rio Grande... (609) 465-7760

CUMBERLAND COUNTY

AIR's Bait & Tackle, 222 Bridgeton Fairton Rd., Bridgeton... (856) 451-1800
Delaware Bay Office, 1672 E. Buckshutem Rd., Millville... (856) 785-0730
Shire Products, 389 S. Lincoln Ave., Vineland... (856) 692-3646

GLOUCESTER COUNTY

Sportsman's Outpost, 2517 Fries Mill Rd., Williamstown... (856) 881-3244

HUDSON COUNTY

Caso's Gun-A-Rama, 176 Danforth Ave., Jersey City... (201) 435-5099

MIDDLESEX COUNTY

Auto Parts of Woodbridge, 108 Main St., Woodbridge... (732) 634-6264
Sayreville Sportsman Shop, 52 Washington Ave., Sayreville... (732) 238-2060

MONMOUTH COUNTY

Brielle Bait & Tackle, 800 Ashley Ave., Brielle... (732) 528-5720
L & H Woods and Water, 2045 Rt. 35, Wall... (732) 282-1812
The Bait Shop, 57 Main St., Bradley Beach... (732) 361-8500

OCEAN COUNTY

American Sportsman, 857 Mill Creek Rd., Manahawkin... (609) 597-4104
Bob Kislis's, 1214 Rt. 37 East, Toms River... (732) 929-9300
Downes Bait & Tackle, 287 Brennan Concourse, Bayville... (732) 269-0137
Fish Bonz Bait & Tackle, 103 Lacey Rd., Forked River... (609) 971-2928
Grizz's Forked River B & T, 232 N. Main St., Forked River... (609) 693-9298
Lacey Marine, 308 Rt. 9, So., Forked River... (609) 693-0151
Pell's Fish & Sport Shop, 335 Mantoloking Rd., Bricktown... (732) 477-2121
Pineland Sporting Goods, 959 W. Veterans Hwy., Jackson... (732) 961-7248
Surf City Bait & Tackle, 317 Long Beach Blvd., Surf City... (609) 494-2333
Tip's Hardware, 218 Main St., West Creek... (609) 296-3192

SOMERSET COUNTY

Efinger Sporting Goods, 513 W. Union Ave., Bound Brook... (732) 356-0604



Contracted workers use a water cannon to blast 8,000 bushels of sea clam shell from a barge onto the one acre oyster restoration site off Good Luck Point, in Barnegat Bay, to improve shellfish habitat.

Shellfish Enhancement in Barnegat Bay

By Dr. Gustavo W. Calvo, Principal Fisheries Biologist

Oysters — A historical perspective

Eastern oysters (*Crassostrea virginica*) and hard clams (*Mercenaria mercenaria*) have been important natural resources in Barnegat Bay since pre-colonial times when Native Americans gathered shellfish for nourishment. Their importance continued when baymen began harvesting shellfish for sale and associated industries developed. At the peak of the oyster industry, from 1870 to 1930, the Barnegat Bay-Cape May area produced 20 percent of all market oysters harvested in New Jersey. By 1930 this figure declined to less than 10 percent.

Oyster harvest declined for various reasons including overharvest, disease and changes to the bay's salinity regime. According to Melbourne Carriker (1961) and Ford (1997), oyster habitat was lost due increased salinity and sedimentation resulting from alteration of Beach Haven Inlet by the storm of 1919, and by the construction of the Point Pleasant Canal in 1925. High salinity favored oyster predators and parasites, and sedimentation smothered oysters. Hard clams, which thrive in high salinity and live in the sediment, populated lost oyster habitat. The effects of severe storms on the bay's ecology gain even greater significance today in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy.

Prominent historic oyster beds, such as the Cedar Creek grounds, extended along the western side of the bay between Cedar Creek and the town of Barnegat. According to Ernest Ingersoll (1882), these very productive grounds — which once served as a source of seed (young shellfish raised beyond the larval stage) for industry in both northern New Jersey and New York — were already being depleted in the late 1800s. In the 1960s, oyster seedbeds were delineated at the mouth of many tributaries and coves along the western side of Barnegat and Little Egg Harbor bays. The seedbed at the mouth of Toms River and off of Good Luck Point was particularly extensive.

Fish and Wildlife staff broadcasting hard clam seed by hand over a five acre restoration site within the Sedge Island Marine Conservation Zone.



Hard Clams

Hard clams are widely distributed over the bottom of New Jersey's coastal bays where water salinity approaches ocean values of 25-32 parts per thousand. In Barnegat and Little Egg Harbor bays, hard clam beds extend baywide from the area off of Cedar Creek to the Little Egg Harbor Inlet.

New Jersey hard clam harvest declined from a maximum of nearly 600,000 bushels around 1900 to a minimum of approximately 100,000 during the 1920s and from the 1970s to the 1990s, according to a 1997 publication by Susan Ford. At the peak of production between the late 1880s to the early 1900s, about one third of the statewide harvest came from southern coastal bays (Barnegat Bay and bays south to Cape May), with most coming from the area of Barnegat Inlet.

The decline in hard clam harvest has been attributed to various factors including loss of habitat due to waterfront development, closure of harvest areas due to poor water quality, increased mortality due to brown tide blooms and over-harvesting. Approximately 250 shellfishermen harvested hard clams by tonging, raking and treading in Barnegat Bay and Little Egg Harbor bays during the summer in the 1950s. The number of clam harvesters declined to only eight when hard clams were scarce between 1998 and 2002, according to McKenzie (2003). In 1985-86, there were 156 million clams in Barnegat Bay, according to a report by the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife. An additional Fish and Wildlife 2001 survey of Little Egg Harbor Bay, showed a decline from 200 million clams in the 1980s to 65 million in 2001. Most recent information on hard clam abundance in Little Egg Harbor and Barnegat bays will be available shortly from Fish and Wildlife surveys respectively conducted in 2012 and 2011.

Shellfish Enhancement

Core shellfish enhancement activities involve planting seed to supplement existing stocks and planting shell to improve shellfish habitat. Shell provides a firm base for planting seed and serves as substrate upon which oyster larvae can set. Shell also enhances habitat complexity which provides refuge from predators and serves as nursery areas for shellfish and other marine species.

Shellfish enhancement activities were initiated as part of the Barnegat Bay Shellfish Restoration Program a collaborative endeavor of Fish and Wildlife along with Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Ocean County and the volunteer organization ReClam the Bay. Shellfish enhancement activities serve as a vehicle for raising environmental awareness and providing hands-on educational opportunities for students and volunteers.

Oyster enhancement activities started in the area off of Good Luck Point, at the mouth of Toms River in Berkeley Township, Ocean County. The selection criteria included knowledge of the area's

historical oyster habitat and that this location is sited within waters approved for shellfish harvesting. Provided that shell would be planted to improve bottom firmness, the area had more potential for restoration than other candidate locations which exhibited softer bottoms.

Sea clam shell was utilized to firm up the base of oyster habitat within a one-acre site. Eight thousand bushels of shell were initially placed in December 2008 and again in June 2011. Oyster seed from various sources — including wild seed collected on shell bags plus seed produced by Rutgers University or commercial hatcheries — was planted following the base shell placement. Hatchery seed was grown on nursery systems operated by the Barnegat Bay Shellfish Restoration Program and ReClam the Bay volunteers or commercial growers. Large seed, such as those grown in nursery systems, is less prone to predation than small seed directly procured from hatcheries. In 2011 nearly one million large oyster seed were planted in New Jersey's shellplanted areas.

Hard Clam Enhancement

The Sedge Island Marine Conservation Zone in Barnegat Bay was identified as the first area to commence hard clam enhancement efforts. The area is within shellfish habitat of recreational value and the water is classified as approved for shellfish harvest. Before enhancement efforts started, clam abundance was found to be low and clams were mostly chowder-sized clams, which are older clams larger than 76 mm in size. Clam seed, in the size range of 15-25 mm, was procured from commercial hatcheries and broadcasted by hand over two to five acre parcels within the area. Large-scale plantings of seed in the size range of 15-25 mm have been demonstrated to assist in the recovery and subsequent stabilization of depleted stocks in Great South Bay, New York (Monica Bricej, 2009). Since 2006, Fish and Wildlife staff planted a total of 3.2 million seed over an area of 37 acres. The seed grew and survived well; use by recreational harvesters has been high. Holders of recreational shellfish harvest licenses are allowed to take 150 shellfish per day. New Jersey's minimum hard clam harvest size is 1.5 inches.

To expand hard clam enhancement efforts beyond the Sedge Island Marine Conservation Zone, 340,000 seed were planted over an area of 9.2 acres located off of Gulf Point in Barnegat Township in October 2012. The site was located in an area where experimental plots (John Krauter, 2003) with shell planted in 1990 exhibited increased hard clam abundance after 10 years relative to adjacent plots with no shell that were examined during the same time. The area was selected after Fish and Wildlife solicited recommendations from commercial and recreational clambers for good candidate locations to target enhancement efforts. The plan is to expand enhancement efforts to new areas and increase seed planting over the next five years.

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Skillful Angler Awards Program



Fishing the Barnegat Light Reef, John Howell caught this 4.24-pound black sea bass.

The Skillful Angler Awards Program is designed to supplement the New Jersey Record Fish Program. It is comprised of three categories: Adult (for anglers age 16 and older), Junior (under age 16) and Catch and Release (based on length). A clear, side-view photo that allows accurate species identification must be included with each application. All photo entries become property of the Division of Fish and Wildlife and will not be returned. Well-composed, high resolution photos may be selected for printing in future *Digests*.

The Skillful Angler Awards program acknowledges that many anglers catch freshwater and marine fish that are not record size, but are still worthy of recognition because the size and weight of the fish sufficiently tested the angler's skill. The program is open to resident and non-resident anglers. All fish must be caught in New Jersey waters using a hook and line during legally open seasons.

Anglers qualifying for a Skillful Angler award receive a certificate and a bronze pin to adorn their fishing hat or jacket. Only one pin and certificate per species—regardless of category—will be awarded annually to each participant, but an angler may submit applications for larger fish caught even after receiving a pin.

At the end of the year, special recognition is given to anglers who catch the largest fish in each species category. The winner of each category is sent a special certificate recognizing his or her accomplishment as the best of New Jersey's Skillful Anglers.

Fish must be measured from the tip of the nose (with mouth closed) to the tip of the tail (see *Measuring Fish* page 12). For Catch and Release categories, fish must be photographed alongside a ruler. For Adult/Junior categories, fish must be weighed and measured by fishing license agents, tackle shops or authorized Fish and Wildlife fisheries biologists.

Learn more online at NJFishandWildlife.com/skflang.htm.

Minimum Entry Requirements:

| Species | Adult Weight (lbs., oz.) | Junior Weight (lbs., oz.) | Catch & Release (inches) |
|-----------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Black Sea Bass | 4 | 3 | 20 |
| Striped Bass | 40 | 36 | 42 |
| Black Drum | 70 | 63 | 46 |
| Bluefish | 18 | 16 | 33 |
| Cod | 30 | 27 | 42 |
| Dolphin | 30 | 27 | n/a |
| Winter Flounder | 2 | 1 lb., 8 oz. | 16 |
| Fluke | 8 | 7 | 27 |
| Kingfish | 1 | 8 oz. | 13 |
| Mako Shark | 250 | 225 | n/a |
| Blue Marlin | 400 | 360 | n/a |
| White Marlin | 60 | 54 | n/a |
| Pollock | 25 | 22 lbs., 8 oz. | 41 |
| Tautog | 8 | 7 | 22 |
| Albacore Tuna | 50 | 45 | n/a |
| Big Eye Tuna | 200 | 180 | n/a |
| Bluefin Tuna | 500 | 450 | n/a |
| Yellowfin Tuna | 120 | 108 | n/a |
| Tuna (other) | 250 | 225 | n/a |
| Weakfish | 10 | 9 | 30 |

The New Jersey State Record Fish Program requires a separate application and is based on weight alone. Scale certification documentation and a weighmaster's signature are necessary. Other rules apply. Visit Fish and Wildlife's Web site at NJFishandWildlife.com for a complete list of current state records. See also page 25.

New Jersey Skillful Angler Application

Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime Telephone Number (_____) _____

Entry Category (check only one):

Adult Junior (16 years and under)

Catch and Release (qualification based on length)

Fish Species (Angler must complete. Subject to verification by a state biologist.)

Weight _____ lb(s), _____ oz. **Length** _____ in. **Girth** _____ in.

Date Caught* ____/____/____ **Time** _____

Location _____

Caught from (check only one):

Boat Shore Surf Jetty

Other (specify) _____

Line Test Used _____ **Reel Type** _____

Rod Type _____ **Lure/Bait** _____

Certification for Adult and Junior Categories

Name of Establishment _____
(where fish was measured and weighed)

Telephone Number _____

Weighmaster's Name _____

Weighmaster's Signature _____

I certify: 1) this fish was caught in New Jersey waters in accordance with state laws and regulations; 2) the entry was weighed on a certified scale (for Adult and Junior categories only).

I have enclosed a clear, side-view photo.

Applicant's Signature _____ **Date** _____

* Application and photo must be submitted **within 30 days** of catching the fish. Applications for fish caught in December will be accepted only until January 31.

Mail to:

NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife
Skillful Angler Awards Program
Pequest Natural Resource Education Center
605 Pequest Rd.
Oxford, NJ 07863

New Jersey State Record Marine Sport Fish

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Record Fish Program honors anglers who catch the largest of select species of freshwater and saltwater fish. Record size is based on weight alone; there are no line classes. Currently there are 61 marine species eligible for entry into the program.

Anglers are reminded that the objective of the Record Fish Program is to increase awareness of fishing opportunities for species that are regularly sought and routinely found on or off the coast of New Jersey. The original list of 72 species was pared down with that objective in mind.

Eleven species are now retired from the list of program-eligible fish, but remain on a separate list posted on Fish and Wildlife's Web site. One historical catch is also retired and posted on the list.

Anglers should be aware of the procedure in effect for entering the Record Fish Program. First, separate applications are required for freshwater and saltwater species. Second, for saltwater entries, it is now mandatory that a marine biologist inspect any potential record fish, as identification solely by photo is not always accurate. Anglers must call Fish and Wildlife's Nacote Creek Research Station at (609) 748-2020 to make arrangements for inspection. In most instances, the fish must be transported to this office in Port Republic. However, in the case of extremely large fish (i.e., shark and tuna), a biologist should be available to travel for dockside inspection. Note that all scale certification requirements still apply, including a valid Certificate of Inspection/Test Report and current Registration Certificate issued by the County Office of Weights and Measures.

The entry deadline is now no later than one month after the date of catch. Note that the triggerfish category is now defined as gray triggerfish.

For a complete list of state record fish or to print an application with complete program rules, visit the Division of Fish and Wildlife's Web site at NJFishandWildlife.com/fishing.htm.



Fishing off of Cape May, this new state record black sea bass taken by Andrew Merendino weighed 8 lbs., 4.5 oz.

New Jersey State Record Marine Fish

| Species | Lbs. | Oz. | Year | Angler | Where Caught |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|-----|------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Amberjack, greater | 85 | 0 | 1993 | Edwin Metzner | Off Cape May |
| Bass, black sea | 8 | 4.5 | 2010 | Andrew A. Merendino | Off Cape May |
| Bluefish | 27 | 1 | 1997 | Roger Kastorsky | 5 Fathom Bank |
| Bonito, Atlantic | 13 | 8 | 1945 | Frank Lykes, Jr. | Off Sandy Hook |
| Cobia | 87 | 0 | 1999 | John Shanchuk | Off Sea Bright |
| Cod | 81 | 0 | 1967 | Joseph Chesla | Off Brielle |
| Crab, blue | 8 ^{3/4} " pt. to pt. | | 2009 | Raymond Ponik | Bayonne |
| Croaker, Atlantic | 5 | 8 | 1981 | Frederick Brown | Delaware Bay |
| *Cunner | 3 | 8 | 2012 | Raul de la Prida | Off Pt. Pleasant |
| Dogfish, smooth | 19 | 9 | 2010 | Richard A. Proot, III | Mantoloking |
| Dogfish, spiny | 15 | 12 | 1990 | Jeff Pennick | Off Cape May |
| Dolphin | 63 | 3 | 1974 | Scott Smith, Jr. | Baltimore Canyon |
| Drum, black | 109 | 0 | 2008 | Nick Henry | Delaware Bay |
| Drum, red | 55 | 0 | 1985 | Daniel Yanino | Great Bay |
| Eel, American | 9 | 13 | 1988 | Warren Campbell | Atlantic City |
| Fluke | 19 | 12 | 1953 | Walter Lubin | Off Cape May |
| Flounder, winter | 5 | 11 | 1993 | Jimmy Swanson | Off Barnegat Light |
| Hake, white | 41 | 7 | 1989 | Wayne Eble | Off Barnegat Light |

| Species | Lbs. | Oz. | Year | Angler | Where Caught |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----|------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Kingfish, Northern | 2 | 8 | 2004 | Chester Urbanski | Barnegat Bay |
| Ling (red hake) | 12 | 13 | 2010 | Billy Watson | Off Manasquan |
| Mackerel, Atlantic | 4 | 1 | 1983 | Abe Elkin | Manasquan Ridge |
| Mackerel, king | 54 | 0 | 1998 | Fernando Alfaiate | Off Cape May |
| *Mackerel, Spanish | 9 | 12 | 1990 | Donald Kohler | Off Cape May |
| Marlin, blue | 1,046 | 0 | 1986 | Phil Infantolino | Hudson Canyon |
| Marlin, white | 137 | 8 | 1980 | Mike Marchell | Hudson Canyon |
| Perch, white | 2 | 12 | 1998 | Michael King | Little Beach Creek |
| *Pollock | 46 | 7 | 1975 | John Holton | Off Brielle |
| Porgy | 5 | 14 | 1976 | Victor Rone | Delaware Bay |
| Sailfish | 43 | 4 | 2006 | Dr. John Tallia | Linden Kohl Canyon |
| Seatrout, spotted | 11 | 2 | 1974 | Bert Harper | Holgate Surf |
| Shad, American | 7 | 0 | 1967 | Rodger West | Great Bay |
| Shad, hickory | Vacant (Minimum Weight 2 lbs.) | | | | |
| Shark, blue | 366 | 0 | 1996 | William Young, Jr. | Mud Hole |
| Shark, bull | Vacant (Minimum Weight 150 lbs.) | | | | |
| Shark, dusky | 530 | 0 | 1987 | Brian Dunlevy | Off Great Egg Inlet |
| Shark, hammer-head | 365 | 0 | 1985 | Walter Thacara | Mud Hole |
| Shark, porbeagle | Vacant (Minimum Weight 100 lbs.) | | | | |
| Shark, sandbar | 168 | 8 | 1987 | John Norton | Little Egg Inlet |
| Shark, s-fin mako | 856 | 0 | 1994 | Christopher Palmer | Wilmington Canyon |
| Shark, thresher | 683 | 0 | 2009 | Bennett Fogelberg | Fingers |
| Shark, tiger | 880 | 0 | 1988 | Billy DeJohn | Off Cape May |
| Sheepshead | 17 | 3 | 2003 | Paul Lowe | Manahawkin Bay |
| Spadefish | 11 | 6 | 1998 | Cliff Low | Delaware Bay |
| Spearfish, longbill | 42 | 0 | 1989 | George Algard | Poor Man's Canyon |
| | 42 | 0 | 1997 | Joseph Natoli | Hudson Canyon |
| Spot | 0 | 13 | 2003 | Robert Belsky, Jr. | Little Sheepshead Creek |
| *Striped Bass | 78 | 8 | 1982 | Al McReynolds | Atlantic City |
| Swordfish | 530 | 0 | 1964 | Edmund Levitt | Wilmington Canyon |
| *Tautog | 25 | 0 | 1998 | Anthony Monica | Off Ocean City |
| Tilefish, golden | 63 | 8 | 2009 | Dennis Muhlenforth | Linden Kohl Canyon |
| Tilefish, gray | 18 | 7 | 2007 | Joseph Sanzone | Tom's Canyon |
| Triggerfish, gray | 5 | 12 | 2008 | Ronald Pires | High Bar Harbor |
| Tuna, albacore | 77 | 15 | 1984 | Dr. S. Scannapiego | Spencer Canyon |
| Tuna, big-eye | 364 | 14 | 1984 | George Krenick | Hudson Canyon |
| Tuna, bluefin | 1,030 | 6 | 1981 | Royal Parsons | Off Pt. Pleasant |
| Tuna, skipjack | 13 | 4 | 1999 | Craig Eberbach | Wilmington Canyon |
| Tuna, yellowfin | 290 | 0 | 1980 | Wayne Brinkerhoff | Hudson Canyon |
| Tunny, little | 24 | 15 | 1977 | Mark Niemczyk | Off Sea Bright |
| Wahoo | 123 | 12 | 1992 | Robert Carr | 28-Mile Wreck |
| Weakfish | 18 | 8 | 1986 | Karl Jones | Delaware Bay |
| Whiting (silver hake) | Vacant (Minimum Weight 2.5 lbs.) | | | | |

* Fish was previously certified by the IGFA as a world record.

For information concerning the New Jersey State Record Fish or Skillful Angler programs, visit the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Web site at NJFishandWildlife.com.

The **Black Sea Bass** Recreational Fishery: A Management Dilemma

BY PETER HIMCHAK, SUPERVISING FISHERIES BIOLOGIST

The black sea bass is undoubtedly a highly desirable, excellent-tasting and popular sportfish—the complete package for any recreational angler. The 2012 black sea bass recreational fishery was highly successful. Good news for everyone, it would seem. Unfortunately, landings may have been too good...

Black sea bass landings were much higher than projected harvest levels based on the regulatory management strategies implemented. Is this success story actually bad news? Let's hope not. Were so many fish harvested that the stock cannot remain sustainable? Did the black sea bass stock assessment paint an accurate portrait of the biological health of the stock? Were the anglers' on-the-water observations correct that black sea bass were highly abundant and the quota was set too low? Are the higher landings a promise of better times to come, or will the bottom fall out on this resource? The questions are easy, the answers are not. What a management dilemma!

Now that your attention is focused on a potential tailspin for the black sea bass recreational fishery, let's review the background process to explain how this potential crisis developed. There is a laundry list of agencies, committees, management tools, laws and steps essential to develop the annual black sea bass recreational quota. Next we'll introduce the players.

WHO'S WHO IN ATLANTIC COAST FISHERIES MANAGEMENT?

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council manages the coastwide black sea bass resource in the federal waters of the Exclusive Economic Zone, 3–200 nautical miles offshore, under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, a compact of all 15 Atlantic coastal states manages black sea bass in states' waters (0–3 nautical miles from shore) under the authority of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act. The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission jointly meet in August each year to set the next year's annual specifications, i.e. quotas, size limits, possession limits, seasons, etc., for several species managed under joint fishery management plans — namely summer flounder, scup, black sea bass and bluefish. Under the above-mentioned legal authority, the states essentially get their marching orders for what they can and cannot do with these four fisheries.

USING THE ANNUAL STOCK ASSESSMENT

The first step in the specifications process is setting the quota. Here, our discussion will be limited to the black sea bass resource. The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council relies on an annual stock assessment update for black sea bass conducted at the National Marine Fisheries Service's Northeast Fisheries Science Center in Woods Hole, Massachusetts. A stock assessment is an indication of the biological

condition of the resource; the assessment then passes into the hands of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee. This committee evaluates the quality and thoroughness of the stock assessment, placing the stock assessment in one of four tiers, with tier 1 being the highest quality.

TIER SELECTION IS A CRITICAL STEP

The Scientific and Statistical Committee's tier selection for a stock assessment is based on the probability of overfishing. The Committee must consider all scientific uncertainty to ensure overfishing doesn't occur, the very reason why the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act exists. Black sea bass is, unfortunately, a tier 4 stock assessment and requires more precaution when setting catch levels.

The Scientific and Statistical Committee calculates an *acceptable biological catch*, in poundage, that cannot be exceeded which also sets the stage for fisheries allocations and eventual harvest quotas. The acceptable biological catch for black sea bass is first divided between the commercial and recreational fisheries, then, discard mortality and research set-aside poundages are deducted to derive a quota for the coming year. For the black sea bass, the *recreational harvest limit* for 2012 was set at 1.32 million pounds. Not much to work with in developing black sea bass recreational fisheries from Massachusetts through North Carolina.

ARE WE OVERWEIGHT?

As recreational catch statistics came in for 2012 from the anglers' "favorite" Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (being replaced by the improved Marine Recreational Information Program through



Captain Bobby Rice / www.FishReelDeal.com

wave 5, with wave 5 equaling the months of September and October, and waves 1 through 4 equaling the previous 8 months), the black sea bass recreational catch was estimated at 2.99 million pounds!

The National Marine Fisheries Service was required under the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act to enact *accountability measures* and close the Exclusive Economic Zone to recreational black sea bass fishing, effective November 1, 2012. Did the data mean too much success was threatening the sustainability of the black sea bass resource, or were there more fish available for sustainable harvest than originally estimated? With a recreational harvest limit set at 1.85 million pounds for 2013 and payback for overages from one year to the next, what does this mean for the 2013 season and years thereafter?

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission met December 14, 2012 to determine what type of black sea bass recreational fishery is possible for 2013 and succeeding years. The decisions follow:

- » The black sea bass recreational fishery in the Exclusive Economic Zone and states' waters will run from January 1 through February 28, with a 12.5-inch minimum size and a 15 fish possession limit.
- » The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council will request the Scientific and Statistical Committee reconsider their black sea bass acceptable biological catch recommendation for 2013.
- » An enhanced operational assessment will be conducted for black sea bass, focusing on its current tier 4 status, which constrains the specifications-setting process.
- » The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission will develop a fast track addendum for developing states' waters measures for 2013 that must meet a 32 percent reduction from 2012 levels. Fortunately, the 2013 recreational harvest limit is 1.85 million pounds.
- » If the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission addendum meets the reduction schedule for 2013, the Exclusive Economic Zone coastwide measures will be a 20 fish possession limit, a 12.5 inch minimum size limit and an open season from January 1 through February 28, May 19 through October 14 and November 1 through December 31.
- » The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council will develop and implement a fast track amendment to consider alternative accountability measures for the 2014 season. Current accountability measures require a pound for pound payback for exceeding recreational harvest limits. *That could mean no recreational harvest for black sea bass in 2014!*

What's in store for 2013 and 2014 remains under development. The Scientific and Statistical Committee met in January 2013 and concluded that the original acceptable biological catch estimate was extremely conservative and recommended an increase of an additional million pounds for the next two years. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Management Board then met in February 2013 and —like the Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Management Council had done earlier in the month— approved the higher acceptable biological catch for black sea bass. Additionally, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved Addendum XXIII to the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fishery Management Plan whereby states in the Southern Region (DE-NC) would remain status quo in 2013 but states in the Northern Region (NJ-MA) would implement recreational management measures to reduce black sea bass recreational harvest by the required 24 percent. Managers are juggling in the air many pieces of scientific data to determine the health of this stock and what future harvest it can support. Hopefully, by the time this article is published, states' waters black sea bass recreational measures will be finalized to include the 24 percent reduction with the Exclusive Economic Zone coastwide measures prevailing — and not a default to more restrictive measures.

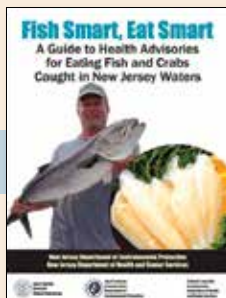
Fisheries management is complex. The setting of size, season and possession limits is a sophisticated, scientific and convoluted process. Just be sure that trying to understand the process of setting management measures does not take away any enjoyment from your recreational fishing activities.



An advertisement for "The Jessie O' Fishing & Cruising Fleet" is framed with a decorative rope border. The title is in a large, red, stylized font. Below the title, the contact information for Captain Andy's Marina is listed: (609) 412-3635, 9317 Amherst Avenue, Margate, New Jersey. Two photos are included: one of a white fishing boat on the water and another of a boat with people on board. The text "Deep Sea Fishing on the Jessie O' II" is above the first photo, and "Back Bay Fishing on Jessie O's Fish N' Fun" is above the second. At the bottom, a list of services includes Ocean & Bay Fishing, Private Parties, Small & Large Groups, Dinner Cruises, and Catering & DJ Services. The website "JessieOfishing.com" is prominently displayed in a red font.

Health Advisory

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Fishing provides enjoyable and relaxing recreation. Fish are an excellent source of protein and other nutrients and play a role in maintaining a healthy, well-balanced diet. Many anglers enjoy cooking and eating their own catch. However, elevated levels of potentially harmful chemical contaminants such as dioxin, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), pesticides and mercury have been found in certain fish and crabs in some New Jersey waters. Fish consumption advisories have been adopted to guide citizens on safe consumption practices.

The current list of fish consumption advisories consists of state-wide, regional and water body-specific warnings for a variety of fish species and fish consumers. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Department of Health and Senior Services have prepared literature and a new Web site to help you make informed choices about which fish to eat and how to reduce your exposure to these harmful chemicals.

**Check online for fish consumption advisories on the local water body in which you fish!
Go to FishSmartEatSmartNJ.org**

To reduce exposure to harmful chemical contaminants when preparing and eating the fish species taken from the identified waters, it is essential to follow the guidelines provided. The DEP encourages you to consult the Fish Smart-Eat Smart Fish Advisory Guide or www.FishSmartEatSmartNJ.org when making decisions about eating recreationally caught fish and crabs.

The Fish Smart-Eat Smart Advisory Guide includes contaminant information, advisory charts, plus preparation and cooking methods to reduce contaminant levels, as well as specific guidelines, advice and prohibitions for people at high risk, such as children, pregnant women and women of child-bearing age. The Guide also includes Web site links to Pennsylvania, Delaware and New York for information about fish consumption advisories for shared waters.

For a complete list of state and federal marine fish consumption advisories visit: FishSmartEatSmartNJ.org.

The fish consumption advisories and Fish Smart-Eat Smart Web site are updated periodically and are available online or from the Office of Science at (609) 984-6070 and through the Department of Health and Senior Services at (609) 826-4935.

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Cody Griglak (left) and his first bluefish held by his father Keith.

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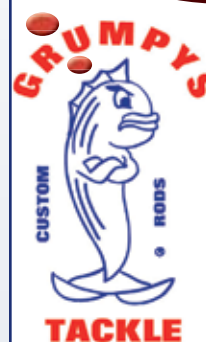
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