

## General Information

The following laws pertain to recreational saltwater fishing, shrimping, crabbing and shellfishing. Individuals (age 16 and older) harvesting marine resources, including finfish, oysters, clams, shrimp and crab must purchase an annual or temporary Saltwater Recreational Fishing License - unless fishing on a licensed public fishing pier; fishing on a licensed charter vessel while under hire; using 3 or fewer drop nets, 3 or fewer fold up traps, or 3 or fewer handlines with no hooks and a single bait per line (chicken necking); or shrimp baiting (which requires a shrimp baiting license).

Fishing piers and chartered vessels charging a fee for fishing must purchase an annual Public Fishing Pier or Charter Vessel license, respectively. Applications for Public Fishing Pier and Charter Vessel Licenses are available from the SCDNR office in Charleston.

Any person engaged in selling any fish or fishery product, including bait, must first obtain the appropriate license. Regulations concerning commercial saltwater fishing are provided with commercial licenses and are available through the Marine Resources Division at the address below.

**For more information, contact:** SCDNR Licensing, P.O. Box 12559, Charleston, SC 29422, 843-953-9301, <http://www.dnr.sc.gov>.

**For federal fishery limits and regulations, contact:** South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201, North Charleston, SC 29405, 843-571-4366, [www.safmc.net](http://www.safmc.net).

**To learn about the projects and programs that received support from the Saltwater Recreational Fishing License Program this fiscal year visit <http://saltwaterfishing.sc.gov>.**

## Saltwater Fishing Methods & Devices

For information on how to purchase a Saltwater Recreational Fishing License see page 57.

### Hook and Line

**Permits/License:** Saltwater Recreational Fishing License required. Federal Highly Migratory Species Permit required when fishing for tuna, billfish, swordfish, and sharks in federal waters. The same federal permit is also required for possession of these species in state waters, with the exception of sharks.

#### Restrictions:

- It is unlawful to fish from a boat within 300 feet of commercial fishing piers extending into the Atlantic Ocean.
- Fishing from the shore in the waters under or within 50 feet on either side or beyond the end of any ocean fishing pier in Horry County is prohibited.
- It is unlawful to use any type of artificial illumination produced by motor fuel powered generators while fishing for flounder in the waters of Pawleys Inlet north to the northern terminus of Main Creek at Garden City Beach.

### Gigging

**Permits/Licenses:** Saltwater Recreational Fishing License required.

#### Restrictions:

- It is unlawful to gig red drum or spotted seatrout during Dec., Jan. and Feb.
- It is unlawful in Georgetown County to gig for fish in saltwaters from the northern tip of North Island to the northern tip of Magnolia Beach during daylight hours.
- It is unlawful to use any type of artificial illumination produced by motor fuel powered generators while gigging for flounder in the waters of Pawleys Inlet north to the northern terminus of Main Creek at Garden City Beach.

### Cast Nets (Other than Shrimp Baiting)

**Permits/Licenses:** Saltwater Recreational Fishing License required.

### Seines & Gill Nets (Anchor, Set, Stake & Drift Nets)

**Permits/Licenses:** Saltwater Recreational Fishing License and Gill net Equipment License required. For more information on equipment licenses call 843-953-9311.

**Seasons:** No closed season in saltwater (except shad, sturgeon and herring).

#### Restrictions:

- SC gamefish (red drum, spotted seatrout, tarpon, and striped bass) may not be taken by nets. Sharks may not be taken by gill nets.

- No more than a lawful gill net can be used recreationally.
- Gill nets no longer than 100 feet with a 3-inch minimum stretched mesh size may be used only in unrestricted areas of the Atlantic Ocean. Gill nets no longer than 100 yards with 3-inch minimum stretched mesh size may be used only in special designated inshore areas.
- Gill nets must be marked with one end buoy that is international orange in color with the name and address of the owner. Operator must be within 500 feet of the net, be within hailing distance and have visual contact with the net at all times when deployed.
- Nets may not be set more than halfway across any waterway at any time.
- Stationary or fixed nets, including gill nets, may not be set or placed within 600 feet of a net previously set.
- It is unlawful to use any seine or gill net in any waters within a state park; except, small hand seines and cast nets for taking shrimp are allowed.

### Trot Lines (Long lines)

**Permits/Licenses:** Saltwater Recreational Fishing License and Trotline Equipment License required. For more information on equipment licenses call 843-953-9311.

#### Restrictions:

- No more than two trotlines with a cumulative total of 50 hooks or baits can be used recreationally.
- Trotlines used in the inshore SC saltwaters must have at least one end buoy, international orange in color with the name and address of the owner.
- Trotlines used in the Atlantic Ocean must be marked with a buoy not less than 20 inches in diameter at each end, international orange in color, which floats in a manner to be clearly visible at all times.

### Special Information

**Special Management Zones** - The following Artificial Reefs have been declared "Special Management Zones" and are protected by federal regulations: BP-25, Beaufort 45, Betsy Ross, Bill Perry, C.J. Davidson, Cape Romain, Capers, Charleston 60, Comanche, Eagles Nest, Edisto 40, Edisto 60, Edisto Offshore, Fripp Island, Georgetown, Greenville, Hilton Head, Hunting Island, Kiawah, Little River Offshore, North Inlet, Paradise, Pawleys Island, Ten Mile, Vermilion, Wayne Upchurch, Will Goldfinch and Y-73. Fishing may be conducted only with handheld hook and line gear and spearfishing gear (excluding powerheads). The use of fish traps, longlines, gill nets and trawls is prohibited. Powerheads (bangsticks) are prohibited except for safety purposes. It is unlawful to possess, land or sell any species of fish taken with a bangstick (reef and non-reef areas).

**Unlawful to Sell Gamefish & Billfish** - The following species have been declared gamefish and native caught fish may not be sold: red drum (channel bass), spotted seatrout, striped bass and tarpon. The purchase, barter, trade, or sale of billfish, including marlin, sailfish and spearfish, is unlawful regardless of where taken or landed.

**Prohibited Practices** - The use of dynamite, gun powder, lime or any other explosive in or about any waters of this state is unlawful. • It is unlawful to take, have in one's possession or to land or sell any species of fish taken by means of a bangstick or similar device. • The commercial sale of diamondback terrapins is prohibited. • Harvest and possession of horseshoe crabs is prohibited without a commercial permit. • It is unlawful to sell or offer for sale any sea turtles or to offer for sale, sell or destroy any sea turtle eggs. Sea turtles are protected by the Federal Endangered Species Act. • It is unlawful to display, feed, net, trap, harpoon, molest or otherwise interfere with the well-being or normal activity of marine mammals of the orders Cetacea, Sirenia and Pinnipedia, including but not limited to bottlenose dolphin, spotted dolphin, common dolphin, manatee, porpoise, harbor seal and any species of whale in any waters of the state. Marine mammals are also protected by federal law. • It is unlawful to buy, sell, possess or ship Shortnose Sturgeon and Atlantic Sturgeon.

**Marine Protected Areas (MPA's)** - Four MPA's (Snowy Grouper Wreck, Northern SC, Edisto, and Charleston Deep Artificial Reef) are located off of the SC coast. Fishing or possession (unless gear is appropriately stored) of snapper grouper species and shark bottom longlining is prohibited in these areas. For locations and more details on these MPA's, please visit [www.safmc.net](http://www.safmc.net) or call 843-571-4366.

## Size & Catch Limits for Saltwater Fish

TL=Total Length, FL=Fork Length; See page 11 for information on how to measure a fish.

AIW=Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway; **State Waters** extend from the saltwater-freshwater dividing line to the 3-mile limit.

**Federal Waters** extend from the 3-mile limit to 200 miles offshore (international waters).

All species in this section must be landed with head and tail intact.

Species	Closed Season	Bag Limit	Minimum Size Limit	Restrictions
<b>Inshore Finfish</b>				
American Shad, Herring	Cannot be harvested by skim bow net May - Jan.	10 shad per person per day except in Santee River and Rediversion Canal (20 per person per day) 1 U.S. bushel of herring per person per day		• Gill nets allowed as for commercial use. If fishing gill nets recreationally must adhere to recreational limits.
Black Drum		5 per person per day	14-inch to 27-inch TL	
Bluefish		15 per person per day		
Flounders (Southern, Summer & Gulf)		20 per person per day not to exceed 40 per boat per day except in the waters of Pawleys Inlet north to the northern terminus of Main Creek at Garden City Beach (10 per person per day not to exceed 20 per boat per day)	14-inch TL	• Bag limits apply to rod & reel or gig • Any type of artificial illumination produced by motor fuel powered generators cannot be used while gigging or fishing for flounder in the waters of Pawleys Inlet north to the northern terminus of Main Creek at Garden City Beach.
Red Drum	Cannot be harvested by gig Dec. - Feb.	3 per person per day (state waters) 0 per person per day (federal waters)	15-inch to 23-inch TL	• May only be taken by rod & reel and gig. • May not be harvested from federal waters.
Saltwater catfishes (Hardhead & gafftopsail catfishes)	Possession prohibited	Possession prohibited		• If caught must be released immediately.
Sheepshead, Spadefish		No more than 20 per person per day in aggregate with snapper grouper complex species		
Spanish mackerel		15 per person per day	12-inch FL	• For-hire vessels must have a Coastal Migratory Pelagics permit to fish for this species in federal waters.
Spotted seatrout	Cannot be harvested by gig Dec. - Feb.	10 per person per day	14-inch TL	• May only be taken by rod & reel and gig.
Striped Bass, Hybrid Bass, & Combinations	Possession prohibited: Jun. 1 – Sept. 30 except in Savannah River as defined on page 8. (2 per person per day year round)	Possession prohibited: Jun. 1 – Sept. 30; 3 fish per person per day: Oct. 1 – May 31 except in Savannah River as defined on page 8. (2 per person per day year round).	26 inch TL except in Savannah river as defined on page 8. (27 inch TL).	• May only be taken by rod & reel.
Tarpon		1 per person per day		• May only be taken by rod & reel
Weakfish		1 per person per day	12-inch TL	
<b>Offshore Finfish</b>				
See "Special Information" (page 14) for information on Marine Protected Areas.				
Cobia		2 per person per day	33-inch FL	• For-hire vessels must have a Coastal Migratory Pelagics permit to fish for this species in federal waters.
Dolphin		10 per person per day not to exceed 60 per boat per day. Headboats have no boat limit		• For-hire vessels must have a Dolphin Wahoo permit to fish for this species in federal waters.
King mackerel		3 per person per day	24-inch FL	• For-hire vessels must have a Coastal Migratory Pelagics permit to fish for this species in federal waters.
Wahoo		2 per person per day		• For-hire vessels must have a Dolphin Wahoo permit to fish for this species in federal waters.

Species	Closed Season	Bag Limit	Minimum Size Limit	Restrictions
<b>Atlantic Tunas</b>				
Federal Highly Migratory Species Permit required. Check current federal regulations by calling 1-888-USA-TUNA (1-888-872-8862) or checking <a href="https://hmspermits.noaa.gov/">https://hmspermits.noaa.gov/</a> .				
Albacore, Skipjack				
Bigeye Tuna			27-inch curved FL	
Bluefin Tuna		1 per vessel per day per trip	27-inch to 73-inch curved FL	
Yellowfin Tuna		3 per person per day per trip	27-inch curved FL	
<b>Billfish</b>				
Federal Highly Migratory Species Permit Required. All billfish to be released may not be removed from the water. All recreationally caught Atlantic billfish landed must be reported to NMFS within 24 hours of landing at the dock. Anglers can report by calling 1-800-894-5528 or by visiting <a href="https://hmspermits.noaa.gov/">https://hmspermits.noaa.gov/</a> . Recreationally caught billfish may not be sold.				
Blue Marlin			99-inch FL from lower jaw	• May only be taken by rod & reel.
White Marlin			66-inch FL from lower jaw	• May only be taken by rod & reel.
Sailfish			63-inch FL from lower jaw	• May only be taken by rod & reel.
Swordfish		1 per person per day not to exceed 4 per vessel per trip	47-inch FL from lower jaw	• May only be taken by rod & reel and handlines. Handlines must be attached to, or remain in contact with, the vessel at all times.
Longbill Spearfish	Possession prohibited	Possession prohibited		
<b>Snapper Grouper Complex</b>				
These species are also federally managed by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) from 3-200 miles offshore. Regulations for some of these species may be changing soon. Please contact the SAFMC at 843-571-4366 or <a href="http://www.safmc.net">www.safmc.net</a> to get the most up to date regulations on these species.				
Possession of a dehooking device is required when fishing for snapper grouper species. Sale of snapper grouper under the recreational bag limit is prohibited UNLESS vessel owner has Federal Commercial Snapper Grouper Permit & applicable SC commercial licenses. For-hire vessels must have a Snapper Grouper permit to fish for this species in federal waters.				
Greater Amberjack		1 per person per day In Apr.: 1 per vessel per trip	28-inch FL	
Hogfish			12-inch FL	
<b>Seabass</b>				
Black Seabass		15 per person per day	12-inch TL	
<b>Porgies and Snappers</b>				
Red Porgy		3 per person per day	14-inch TL	
Vermillion Snapper	Closed: Nov. 1 - Mar. 31	5 per person per day; excluded from 10 snapper per person per day limit	12-inch TL	
Red Snapper	Possession prohibited through Dec. 5, 2010.	Possession prohibited through Dec. 5, 2010.		• For red snapper regulations after Dec. 5, 2010, contact South Atlantic Fishery Management Council.
Lane Snapper			8-inch TL	
Black, Blackfin, Cubera, Dog, Yellowtail, Gray, Mahogany, Silk, Schoolmaster & Queen snapper		10 per person per day from this group	12-inch TL	
Mutton Snapper			16-inch TL	

Species	Closed Season	Bag Limit	Minimum Size Limit	Restrictions
<b>Snapper Grouper Complex - continued</b>				
<b>Grouper and Tilefish</b>				
Gag & Black Grouper	Closed: Jan. 1 - Apr. 30	3 per person per day from this group; no more than 1 Gag or Black grouper or more than 1 Snowy Grouper or Golden Tilefish may be included in this total; no more than 1 Warsaw Grouper or 1 Speckled Hind per vessel per trip	24-inch TL	
Scamp, Red, Yellowfin, & Yellowmouth Groupers	Closed: Jan. 1 - Apr. 30		20-inch TL	
Blueline Tilefish, Golden Tilefish, Misty Grouper, Sand Tilefish, Snowy Grouper, Yellowedge Grouper				
Coney, Grasby, Red Hind, Rock Hind, Tiger Grouper	Closed: Jan. 1 - Apr. 30			
Warsaw and Speckled Hind				
Nassau & Goliath Grouper	Possession prohibited	Possession prohibited		• If caught must be released by cutting the line and not removing the fish from the water.

Species	Closed Season	Bag Limit	Minimum Size Limit	Restrictions
<b>All Other Snapper Grouper Complex Species</b>				
Including but not limited to: Lesser amberjack; Cottwick; Bluestrip; White; Smallmouth; French & Spanish Grunts; Scup; Sheepshead; Almaco; Bar; Crevalle & Yellow jacks; Black margate; Margate; Whitebone; Knobbed; Jolthead; Saucereye; Grass & Lonespine porgies; Porkfish; Puddingwife; Banded rudderfish; Sailors choice; Bank seabass; Rock seabass; Spadefish; Gray, Queen and Ocean Triggerfish		20 per person per day		• Bluerunners and Tomtates are excluded from the bag limit.
<b>Sharks</b>				
Federal Highly Migratory Species Permit required in federal waters. All sharks must be landed with fins, head and tail naturally attached. Check current federal regulations by visiting <a href="https://hmspermits.noaa.gov/">https://hmspermits.noaa.gov/</a> .				
Dogfish (spiny & smooth)				
Atlantic Sharpnose		1 per person per day		
Bonnethead		1 per person per day		
Blacknose, Blacktip, Blue, Bull, Finetooth, Great Hammerhead, Scalloped Hammerhead, Smooth Hammerhead, Lemon, Shortfin Mako, Nurse, Porbeagle, Spinner, Thresher, Tiger and Oceanic Whitetip Sharks		1 shark per vessel per day from this group	54-inch FL	
Atlantic Angel, Basking, Bignose, Dusky, Galapagos, Longfin Mako, Narrowtooth, Night, Caribbean Reef, Sandbar, Sevengill, Caribbean Sharpnose, Silky, Bigeye Sixgill, Sixgill, Smalltail, Bigeye Thresher, Bigeye Sand Tiger, Sand Tiger, Whale and White Sharks	Possession prohibited	Possession prohibited		• If caught sharks from this group must be released immediately.

## Crustacean & Shellfish Methods & Devices

When fishing for crustaceans or shellfish a Saltwater Recreational Fishing License is required - unless you are using 3 or fewer drop nets, 3 or fewer fold up traps, or 3 or fewer handlines with no hooks and a single bait per line (chicken necking); or shrimp baiting (which requires a shrimp baiting license).

### Crab Pots

**Permits/Licenses:** Saltwater Recreational Fishing License required.

**Restrictions:**

- Licensee can fish no more than two pots recreationally. A Commercial Saltwater Fishing License, Vessel Decal, and Gear license are required for over two pots.
- If unattended each pot float must bear the name and address or license number of owner.
- No crab pot shall be left unattended in coastal waters more than 5 days.
- No crab trap or pot may be set within 200 yards of a public boat landing or launching area or set so as to be left dry at low tide.

- A float attached to a crab pot or trap must be made of solid, buoyant material which does not sink upon being punctured or cracked. The floats must be constructed of plastic, PVC Spongex, plastic foam, or cork. The primary float for a recreational pot or trap must be yellow in color and at least ten inches in length if rectangular, cylindrical, or conical and at least five inches in diameter or width. Round or spherical floats must be at least six inches in diameter. Buoy lines for crab pots must be made of nonfloating material.

### Gathering Shellfish (Oysters & Clams)

**Permits/Licenses:** Saltwater Recreational Fishing License required.

**Season:** Typically open Sept. 16 through May 15 (½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset). Call 843-953-9300 for season dates.

**Restrictions:**

- Shellfish may be harvested recreationally from State shellfish grounds and Public shellfish grounds. Public and State shellfish grounds are marked with signs. Recreational harvesting is allowed on culture permit grounds (formerly leases), but only when the harvester has in possession written permission from the culture permit holder. License must be in possession while harvesting.

Maps of areas where oysters and clams may be gathered in season for recreation may be found on the web at [www.dnr.sc.gov](http://www.dnr.sc.gov), by calling 843-953-9854 or by writing Marine Resources at PO Box 12559, Charleston, SC 29422.

## Trawling

**Permits/Licenses:** Commercial Saltwater Fishing License, Vessel Decal and Gear license required.

**Restrictions:**

- Trawling for personal use is restricted to the same license requirements, areas and seasons as commercial trawling. This information is provided with the license.

## Shell Recycling

Oyster shells are collected throughout the coastal area and reused for shellfish culture. Call 843-953-9300 for shell drop-off site locations, or visit [www.saltwaterfishing.sc.gov/oyster.html](http://www.saltwaterfishing.sc.gov/oyster.html) for detailed maps of locations.

## Shrimp Seines

**Permits/Licenses:** Saltwater Recreational Fishing License required.

**Restrictions:**

- Maximum length of shrimp seine 40 feet, maximum depth 6 feet, minimum mesh size, 1/2 inch square (1 inch stretch), maximum mesh size 7/8 inch square (1.75 inch stretch).
- Tail bags or pockets are not allowed on seines when pulled by hand.
- Staked seines are considered commercial channel net devices; allowances and restrictions are provided with the purchase of a commercial license.

Species	Closed Season	Possession & Size Limit	Restrictions
<b>Crab, Lobster and Shellfish</b>			
Blue Crabs		Size Limit: 5-inch minimum carapace width (point to point)	• Females with egg mass (sponge) must be returned to water unharmed immediately.
Stone Crabs		Size Limit: Claws must be 2 3/4-inch minimum forearm (propodus)	• Only crabs with 2 claws can have one removed. • Only the larger of the 2 claws may be kept. • No claw may be removed from a female with egg mass. • It is unlawful to possess any stone crab body live or dead.
Spiny Lobster		Possession Limit: 2 per person per day Size Limit: 3-inch minimum carapace	• Removal of tail at sea prohibited. • No harvest of berried females. • No explosives, poisons, spears, or piercing devices other than fishing hooks are allowed.
Oysters	Typically closed May 16 - Sept. 15; may be shortened or extended by the SCDNR. Call 843-953-9300 for season dates.	Possession Limit: 2 U.S. bushels per person per day from public or state shellfish grounds; No boat, vehicle, or boat/vehicle combination may contain more than 3 personal limits regardless of the number of people on the boat or in the vehicle.	• A person may recreationally harvest shellfish (oysters and/or clams) no more than 2 days per 7 day period.
Clams	Typically closed May 16 - Sept. 15; may be shortened or extended by the SCDNR. Call 843-953-9300 for season dates.	Possession Limit: 1/2 U.S. bushel per person per day from public or state shellfish grounds; No boat, vehicle, or boat/vehicle combination may contain more than 3 personal limits regardless of the number of people on the boat or in the vehicle. Size Limit: 1-inch minimum thickness	• A person may recreationally harvest shellfish (oysters and/or clams) no more than 2 days per 7 day period.
<b>Shrimp</b>			
Taking Shrimp Without Bait	Closed: Dec. 16 - Apr. 30	48 quarts whole or 29 quarts headed per boat, per person if no boat is used, or per seining party	• 12 dozen dead or live shrimp allowed per boat during closed season. • See Crustacean and Shellfish Methods and Devices for Shrimp Seine Gear Restrictions (page 18).
Shrimp Baiting	60-day season set by SCDNR beginning at noon on the last Friday on or before Sept. 15. 2010 Shrimp baiting season begins 12 noon Friday Sept. 10, 2010 and ends 12 noon Tuesday Nov. 9, 2010.	48 quarts whole or 29 quarts headed per boat or per person if no boat is used	• Participants must have a shrimp baiting license. • License holders, while shrimping from a boat, may be assisted by a resident who is not required to have a shrimp baiting license • Shrimp caught over bait cannot be sold. • No more than 10 poles can be used per license per day. Poles must be marked with reflective tape and may not exceed 1-inch in diameter and each pole must have a numbered tag attached which corresponds with the shrimp baiting license. • No more than 10 poles can be used per boat. • All poles of a licensed set must be within 100 linear yards of each other and sets of poles must be at least 25 yards apart. Poles may not be set within 50 yards of any dock, public landing or boat ramp. Unattended poles will be confiscated. • Owners of private docks or persons with written permission may bait from those docks once properly licensed and with numbered tag displayed. • Shrimp pots or traps are prohibited. • Cast nets used for taking shrimp over bait must have a minimum mesh size of 1/2-inch square (1-inch stretch). • Individuals who may NOT obtain a shrimp baiting license are: 1) owners or officers of a corporation which owns a vessel specified on a trawl license; 2) masters of a vessel specified on a trawl license; 3) licensed to use a channel net; 4) licensed to use a cast net for a commercial purpose; 5) licensed as a wholesale seafood dealer.