

New Jersey Marine Digest

May 2024



**New Jersey's Evolving
Coastal Environment**

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A Summary of Recreational Regulations and
Marine Fish and Shellfish Management Information

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New Jersey DEP Fish & Wildlife

Report Marine, Shellfish and Finfish Violations

(609) 748-2050 or call the 24-hour DEP Hotline: 877-WARNDEP

Violators of the Marine Fisheries laws are subject to a \$30–\$100 per fish or \$300 to \$3,000 fine.

Federal Marine Fisheries Contacts

NOAA Fisheries

Enforcement Hotline

24-hour non-emergency tipline
(800) 853-1964

NOAA Fisheries Office of Law

Enforcement — Northeast Enforcement Division HQ

(978) 281-9249

Federal Fisheries Law

Enforcement Field Offices

Wall: (732) 280-6490
Northfield: (609) 415-2941

On the cover: Atlantic Cod, *Gadus morhua* © Mirecca.



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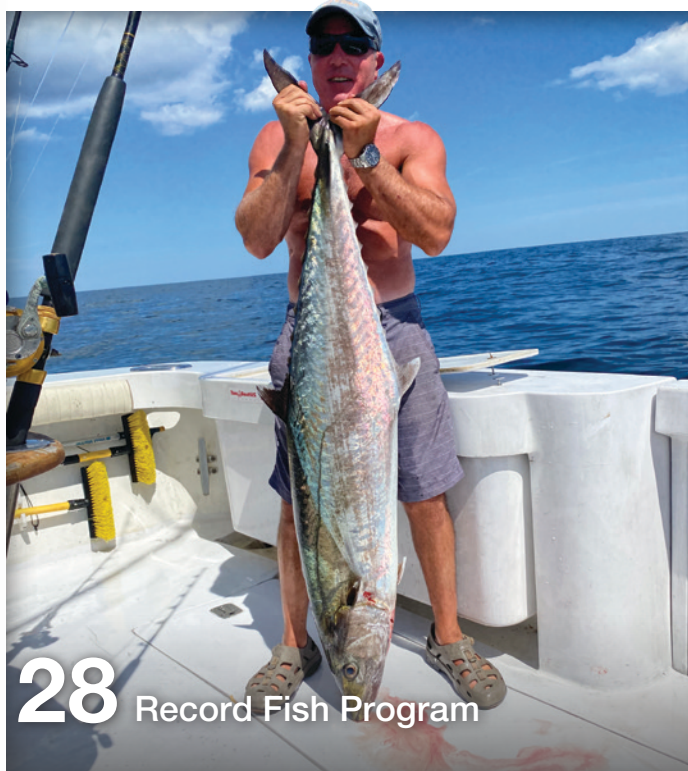
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Assistant Commissioner's Message

DAVE GOLDEN




With another great fishing season upon us, I want to share my enthusiasm for fishing and the outdoors and remind everyone of the importance of responsible fishing practices. Our love of fishing not only brings us excitement and fulfillment but also carries with it the responsibility to protect and preserve our marine resources for future generations.

New Jersey's waters offer a diverse range of fish species and habitats, making our coast, bays, and open waters a prime destination for anglers of all levels. Whether you prefer casting a line from the shore, heading out on your boat, or jumping aboard a charter or party boat, there's something for everyone to enjoy in New Jersey. From striped bass and bluefish to fluke and black sea bass, the opportunities for a memorable fishing experience are many.

We all lead busy lives, but it's important to make time for the outdoors and enjoy the natural beauty surrounding us. Fishing provides the perfect opportunity to unwind, relax, and connect with nature. Whether fishing solo, with friends, or with family, the time spent outdoors is always rewarding.

The "saltwater experience" is also a great way to introduce youth to the joys of fishing. Taking kids fishing not only creates lasting memories but also helps instill a love and respect for our marine environment. It's important to provide children with the opportunity to experience the thrills of fishing and introducing them to the outdoors helps foster a conservation ethic that has long-lasting benefits.

While catching fish is always the goal of any fishing trip, remember the importance of following regulations and practicing responsible fish-handling techniques. By adhering to the regulated size limits, bag limits, and seasons, we can ensure that New Jersey's fish populations remain healthy and sustainable. Additionally, practicing proper handling and release methods can reduce unintended fish mortality and help protect fragile fish populations. The use of circle hooks to reduce deep hooking will also increase the survival rates of released fish. These simple practices can make a big difference in our collective management of fish populations in New Jersey's waters.

As we gear up for another exciting fishing season, let's remember that our actions today will shape the future of fishing in New Jersey. By working together, we can ensure that our waters remain abundant and vibrant for years to come. So, grab your gear, head out to the water, enjoy the outdoors, and catch some fish! 

Dave Golden is the Assistant Commissioner of New Jersey DEP Fish & Wildlife.



Williamstown, MA | Birmingham, AL

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Graphic Design:

Jon Gulley, Dane Fay, Evelyn Haddad, Chris Sobolowski



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Mark Your Calendar for the Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament!

May 19, 2024

Island Beach State Park, Seaside Park, NJ

Come celebrate the 33rd year of the Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament! Enjoy a great day of surf fishing with family and friends.

The individual who catches the overall largest fish wins the "Governor's Award" and will have their name engraved on the Governor's Cup, which is permanently displayed at Island Beach State Park. Prizes are awarded to winners in a variety of age group and fish species categories.

All funds raised by the tournament go toward improving beach access, surf fishing instruction programs and equipment, plus marine education and restoration projects.

The tournament is sponsored by NJDEP's Fish & Wildlife and State Park Service, New Jersey State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Jersey Coast Anglers Association and New Jersey Beach Buggy Association.

For more information visit: dep.nj.gov/njfw/fishing/marine/governors-surf-fishing-tournament/ or email Karen.Byrne@dep.nj.gov.



Jonathan Carlucci/NJDEP Fish & Wildlife

David Koenigstein of Toms River won the 2023 Governor's Cup with a 37 1/2" Striped Bass!

Operation Game Thief

Report Abuse of our Outdoor Heritage!

1-855-OGT-TIPS

24 Hours a Day, Seven Days a Week

The person who poaches, pollutes habitat and abuses public land tarnishes the image of sportsmen and robs us of our fish and wildlife as well as tax and license dollars. You can make a difference.

Call OGT to report:

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- Destruction of signs and state property
- Illegal killing, taking or possession of any wildlife

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Funded by the New Jersey State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs.

Designed to encourage sportsmen to report poaching and wildlife crimes.



New Jersey Marine Digest

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The *Digest* is available at coastal license agents, bait and tackle shops and NJDEP Fish & 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: Atlantic Cod, *Gadus morhua* © Mirecca.

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New Jersey DEP Fish & 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.

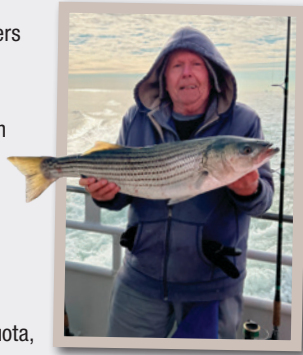
Our Goals

- 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.
- To maximize the recreational and commercial use of New Jersey's fish and wildlife for both present and future generations.

Striped Bass Bonus Program

The Striped Bass Bonus Program will continue in 2024, where anglers possessing a Bonus permit may keep a striper at 24 inches or less than 28 inches. The open season for this program is May 15 through December 31. Check website for updates at dep.nj.gov/njfw/fishing/marine/striped-bass-bonus-program/

The current allocation from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is 200,798 pounds. Should New Jersey exceed this quota, any average would be subtracted from the following year's quota.



Striper caught on the Queen Mary.

Application Process: To apply and for regulation or program updates, please visit <http://dep.nj.gov/njfw/fishing/marine/striped-bass-bonus-program/>. Applications are only accepted online and permits will be mailed. The permit is non-transferable and valid for the current calendar year. Only one fish can be harvested per permit. Fishing logs must be kept and harvest reporting is mandatory.

Striped Bass Bonus Permit Harvest Reporting: The Striped Bass Bonus Permit must be securely attached to the fish through the mouth and gill immediately upon capture and prior to transportation. **Harvest reporting is mandatory and must be reported online or by leaving a message at (609) 748-2074.**

Fishing Logs: A log of striped bass fishing activity must be kept and submitted by January 15, 2025 in order to remain eligible for 2025.

Striped Bass Bonus Program Harvest 1996–2023

Harvest Year	# Fish Harvested	Weight Harvested (lbs)	Mean Length (inches)	Mean Weight (lbs)	% of Quota
1996	233	4,050	35.7	17.4	1.8
1997	344	7,678	36.8	22.3	3.4
1998	473	11,149	37.2	23.6	5.0
1999	574	13,174	36.2	23.1	5.9
2000	2,488	42,794	33.7	17.2	19.0
2001	4,583	79,774	33.5	17.4	35.5
2002	4,855	82,050	33.0	16.9	36.5
2003	6,101	121,410	35.0	20.0	37.7
2004	4,602	81,870	32.8	17.8	25.4
2005	2,047	29,866	31.7	14.6	9.3
2006	1,127	23,656	34.9	21.0	7.4
2007*	708	13,615	34.0	19.2	4.2
2008	367	7,345	34.3	20.0	2.3
2009	526	10,330	34.2	19.3	3.2
2010	728	12,833	34.5	17.6	4.0
2011	916	16,332	34.0	17.8	5.1
2012*	325	6,285	34.3	19.3	2.0
2013	404	6,096	33.4	15.1	1.9
2014	178	3,653	35.0	20.5	1.1
2015*	3,301	21,479	25.8	6.5	9.9
2016	3,686	24,963	25.9	6.8	11.6
2017	2,161	14,602	25.9	6.8	6.8
2018	1,101	6,786	25.3	6.2	3.1
2019	5,558	32,000	26.0	5.8	14.9
2020*	5,746	36,865	25.5	6.4	17.1
2021	6,457	41,867	25.7	6.5	19.4
2022	5,742	36,807	25.8	6.4	17.0
2023**	9,613	61,662	25.8	6.4	28.6

* Significant administrative or regulatory changes to the SBBP took place.

** Preliminary

Using Circle Hooks

When Fishing with Bait for Striped Bass

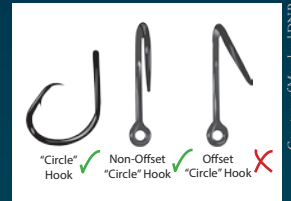
Striped bass caught by Wayne Hummel on the Mad Hatter.

Regulations require using inline (non-offset) circle hooks when fishing for striped bass with bait. Bait is defined as any marine or aquatic organism live or dead, whole or parts thereof. This does not apply to artificial lures with bait attached. Striped bass caught using an unapproved method of take must be returned to the water immediately, without unnecessary injury. (See striped bass regulations, page 17.)

Using non-offset circle hooks significantly increases survival of released fish. From 2017 to 2021, more striped bass were estimated to have died from catch and release than were harvested - highlighting the importance of switching to circle hooks and improving fish handling practices.

What is a Circle Hook?

A circle hook is defined as a non-offset hook where the point curves back perpendicularly towards the shank. The term *non-offset* means the point and barb are in the same plane as the shank. When the hook is laying on a flat surface, the entire hook and barb should lay flat.



Non-offset (inline) circle hooks must be used when fishing for striped bass with bait.

How Do Circle Hooks Increase Survival of Released Striped Bass?

Using circle hooks reduce occurrences of gut-hooking which can cause injuries to internal organs of the fish. If a striped bass swallows the bait, the circle hook is designed to slide out from its throat and catch on the corner of its jaw. When a fish is hooked in the corner of its jaw, this also leads to shorter de-hooking times and less overall stress on the fish.

Tips for Using Circle Hooks

When a fish takes your bait, do not sweep the rod upward to set the hook. The circle hook sets itself when the fish tries to swim away. Simply let the line come tight, then fight the fish.

Added Tips for the Survival of Released Fish

Tackle Recommendations

- Use barbless hooks or bend barbs down.
- Use non-stainless steel hooks. If gut-hooked, leave the hook in the fish and cut the line as close to the hook as possible. The hook will rust away.
- Replace treble hooks on artificial lures with single hooks.
- Use appropriate tackle suited to the size of the fish; don't fight the fish to exhaustion.

Fish Handling Best Practices

- Keep the fish in the water when de-hooking.
- If you must take the fish out of the water, use a rubber or soft-mesh landing net.
- Avoid handling fish with dry hands.
- Avoid dragging fish across dry sand or rocks.
- Hold fish horizontally with support.
- Avoid touching the fish's gills or eyes.
- Return the fish to the water as soon as possible.
- When reviving fish, hold fish headfirst into the current so water flows through the mouth and over the gills.