

New Jersey Marine Digest

May 2025

**Coastal Habitats
of New Jersey**
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Program Update**
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A Summary of Recreational Regulations and
Marine Fish and Shellfish Management Information
NJFishandWildlife.com



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Hotlines

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

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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: Great Bay Boulevard Wildlife Management Area in Ocean County, NJ.
Photo by Matthew Hencheck, NJDEP Fish & Wildlife.



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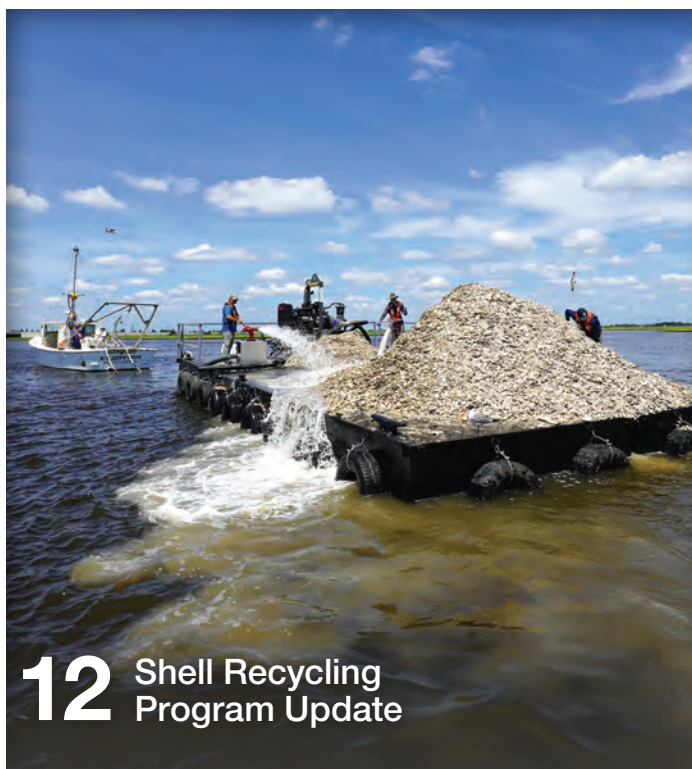
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Assistant Commissioner's Message

DAVE GOLDEN



With the 2025 fishing season upon us, I am filled with excitement and gratitude for the incredible opportunities that New Jersey's waters offer. Our coastline, bays, and open waters are a haven for anglers of all skill levels, providing a diverse range of fish species and habitats. Whether you're a seasoned pro or a newcomer to fishing in the Garden State, there's something extraordinary waiting for you offshore.

Fishing in New Jersey is more than just a pastime; it's a gateway to nature, relaxation, and adventure. It's a chance to immerse yourself in the beauty of our coastal environment. Whether you are casting a line from shore, navigating our waters in your boat, or joining a charter or party boat, each fishing expedition promises unique memories and the thrill of the catch.


This season, we are excited to announce the expansion of the Delaware Bay Reef, where 7,000 tons of concrete have been deployed to create nearly an acre of new habitat for marine life. This initiative repurposes former concrete pilings into a vibrant ecosystem that attracts popular fish species like flounder and black sea bass. Located just northwest of Cape May Point, this reef is a prime spot for fishing and diving. I encourage everyone to get out and experience the excitement of this new marine habitat—fish this part of the bay and enjoy a day out on the reef!

Our coastal waters boast a diverse array of species, from striped bass to bluefish and fluke. There also are abundant recreational clamming opportunities. These activities not only bring the joy of catching fresh seafood but also serve as a reminder of our responsibility to preserve and protect these vital marine resources. As stewards of our environment, we must ensure that our actions today contribute to the sustainability of our fisheries and shellfish populations for future generations.

Introducing children to the joys of fishing is one of the most rewarding aspects of our angling adventures. Taking young ones out for a day on the water can create lasting memories and foster a deep appreciation for our marine ecosystems. These early experiences can instill a conservation ethic that benefits both the individual and our community. By sharing our love and respect for the natural world, we can inspire the next generation to embrace conservation.

While the thrill of the catch is undeniable, we must also remember the importance of responsible fishing practices. Following size and bag limits and seasonal regulations and practicing proper fish-handling techniques are essential for protecting our fish populations. Using circle hooks allows us to reduce deep hooking and increase the survival rates of released fish, which supports the health and abundance of our fish populations.

As we gear up for the 2025 fishing season, I invite you all to embrace the spirit of adventure and stewardship. Let's work together to ensure New Jersey's waters remain vibrant and abundant. By practicing responsible fishing, we can safeguard these precious resources and enjoy the bounties of our marine environment for generations.

So, gather your gear, set your sights on the horizon, and prepare for an unforgettable season of fishing in New Jersey. Let the thrill of the catch, the serenity of the sea, and the camaraderie of fellow anglers inspire you to make the most of the season. Here's to fantastic days outside and on the water, filled with excitement, discovery, and respect for our treasured resources. Tight lines and happy fishing! 

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



About This Guide

This high-quality guide is brought to you by NJDEP Fish & Wildlife through a partnership with Kalkomey, a trusted leader in outdoor safety education since 1995. In addition to producing this guide, Kalkomey also offers a suite of educational courses to help people enjoy the outdoors safely.

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Mark Your Calendar for the 34th Annual Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament!

May 18, 2025

Island Beach State Park, Seaside Park

Come celebrate the 34th year of the Governor's Surf Fishing Tournament! Celebrating the Legacy of Frank Dara. 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 groups 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 Fish & Wildlife, NJDEP 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.



Matthew Hencheck/NJDEP Fish & Wildlife

Jonathan Dziekan (center) of Bayonne won the 2024 Governor's Cup, with a 36 ¾" Black Drum!

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New Jersey Marine Digest

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Cover photo: Great Bay Boulevard Wildlife Management Area in Ocean County, NJ. Photo by Matthew Hencheck, NJDEP Fish & Wildlife.

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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



Barry Emens with his catch on the F/V Susan Hudson.

The Striped Bass Bonus Program will continue in 2025, where anglers possessing a Bonus permit may keep a striper at 24 inches to 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/stripped-bass-bonus-program/

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

Application Process: To apply and for regulation or program updates, please visit dep.nj.gov/njfw/fishing/marine/stripped-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, 2026 in order to remain eligible for 2026.

Reducing Striped Bass Recreational Release Mortality

Striped bass release mortality is defined as recreationally caught striped bass that are released alive but die due to stress or injury from the fishing interaction.

Due to regulations or angler preference, the majority of recreationally caught striped bass (over 90%) are released alive. Even though most of these fish survive, in some years more striped bass are estimated to die from being caught and released than are actually harvested. Between 40-50% of total striped bass removals are attributed to release mortality each year.

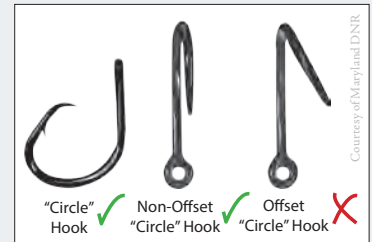
In 2021 and 2023, regulations were implemented to reduce release mortality in the striped bass recreational fishery:

Using Circle Hooks When Fishing with Bait for Striped Bass

It is required to use 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.

A circle hook is defined as a non-offset hook where the point curves back perpendicularly towards the shank. The design is intended to reduce the occurrence of gut hooking.



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

Using Gaffs for Striped Bass

It shall be unlawful for any person to gaff or attempt to gaff any striped bass at any time when fishing recreationally.

What Can You Do to Reduce Release Mortality?

Release mortality is a concern in most recreational fisheries. Management tools to reduce release mortality are limited but there are things you can do to help save more fish.

Follow the regulations above when fishing for striped bass and follow the tips below when fishing for any species.

Tips for Releasing Fish Unharmmed

Tackle Recommendations

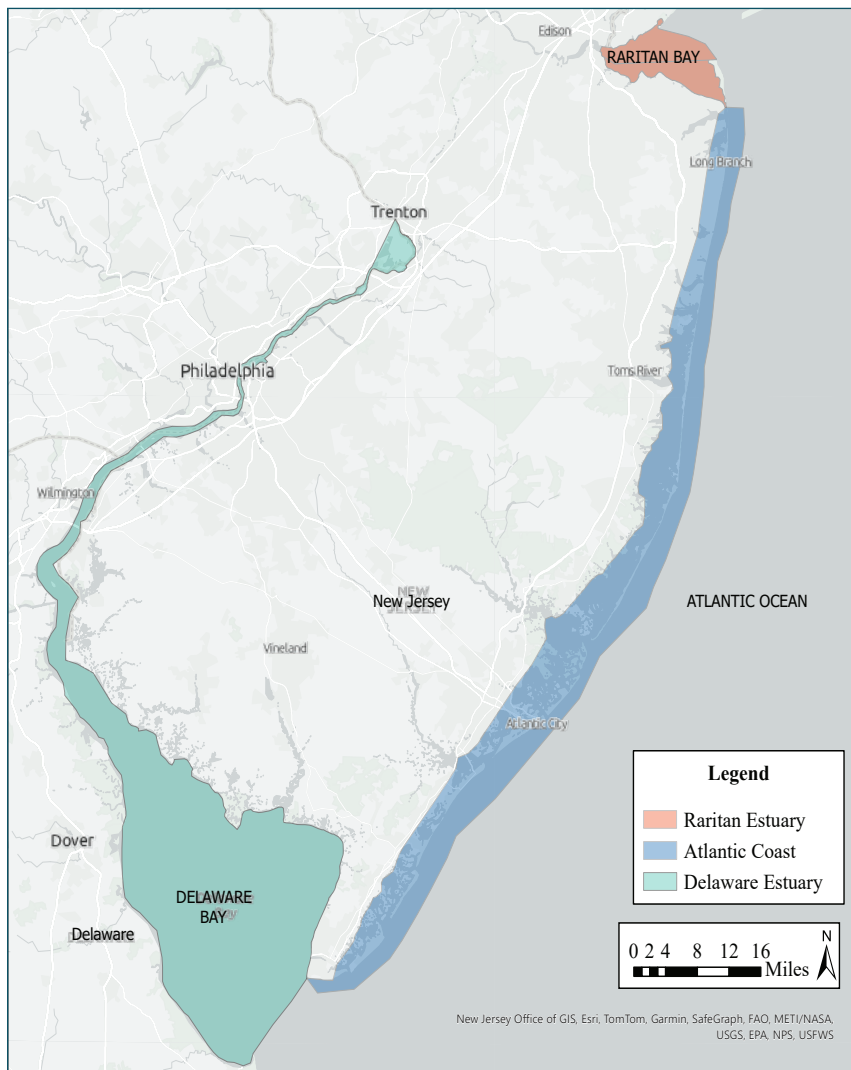
- Use barbless hooks or bend barbs down.
- Use non-stainless steel hooks. If gut-hooked, leave the hook in the fish and cut the line as close to the hook as possible. The hook will rust away.
- Replace treble hooks on artificial lures with single hooks.
- Use appropriate tackle suited to the size of the fish.
- Do not fight the fish to exhaustion. Land fish quickly, except when retrieving from depths of 40-feet or more.
- If retrieving fish from greater depths, minimize the effect of barotrauma, which occurs when gases expand faster than they can diffuse due to decreasing pressure during ascent through the water column. For more information about barotrauma and how to release fish safely visit: fisheries.noaa.gov/national/resources-fishing/catch-and-release-best-practices.

Fish Handling Best Practices

- Keep the fish in the water when de-hooking or use a rubber or knotless landing net. Carefully remove hooks with a dehooker or needle-nose pliers.
- Use wet hands or gloves to minimize loss of fish's protective layer. Avoid handling fish with dry hands.
- Minimize physical injury. Avoid dragging fish across dry sand or rocks. Do not allow fish to flop around on deck.
- Hold fish horizontally with support. Do not touch gills or eyes.
- Return the fish to the water as soon as possible. Minimize time spent taking pictures.
- When reviving fish, move fish headfirst into the current so water flows through the mouth and over the gills.

Coastal Habitats of New Jersey

Habitat is defined as the natural home of an animal. Habitat loss and degradation have been identified as significant factors affecting the long-term sustainability of the nation's fisheries.¹



¹ Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Habitat Committee

In New Jersey, there are many types of habitats, one of which is the saltwater environment where many recreationally sought species live. The NJDEP Fish & Wildlife's **Marine Resources Administration (MRA)**, comprised of the Bureau of Marine Fisheries and the Bureau of Marine Habitat and Shellfisheries, studies and protects saltwater species within the coastal habitats of the state. By conducting different types of surveys and assessing the populations of various species, biologists can determine how healthy local habitats are and which areas need improvement. This data allows biologists to make educated recommendations for the conservation of the species and the waterways they call home.

Biologists survey tidal waters in all areas of New Jersey. For this article, the state has been broken down into three regional habitats:

- **Raritan Estuary:** Sandy Hook Bay, Raritan Bay and tidal tributaries.
- **Atlantic Coast:** Atlantic Ocean, inlets, bays, and tidal tributaries from Sandy Hook to Cape May.
- **Delaware Estuary:** Delaware Bay, Delaware River, and tidal tributaries.

Current MRA Surveys by Region

Raritan Estuary

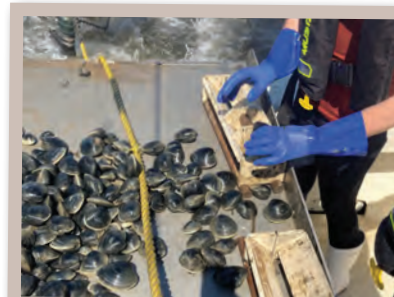
Angler Intercept Survey
Hard Clam Estuarine Inventory
Fishery Resource Inventory

Atlantic Coast

Angler Intercept Survey
Blue Crab Pot Survey
Glass Eel Survey
Ocean Trawl Stock Assessment Survey
River Herring Assessment Survey
Shell Recycling Program
Ventless Trap Survey
Yellow Eel Survey

Delaware Estuary

Acoustic Telemetry Monitoring Survey
Angler Intercept Survey
Juvenile Finfish Trawl Survey
Horseshoe Crab Spawning Survey
Oyster Reef Enhancement and Transplant Program
River Herring Assessment Survey
Striped Bass Recruitment Seine Survey
Striped Bass Tagging Survey



Biologists measure clams collected during a dredge tow.



Marine Fisheries staff pull in an otter trawl during the Raritan-Sandy Hook Bay Complex Fishery Resource Inventory.



Typical October catch dominated by American lobster and black sea bass during the Ventless Trap Survey.

Raritan Estuary

Hard Clam Estuarine Inventory:

This inventory of shellfish resources assesses hard clam populations across New Jersey's estuaries. Since 1983, the survey's results have determined the standing stock, distribution, and relative abundance of hard clams, providing important data for the management of shellfish resources.

The survey involves towing a hydraulic dredge for 100 feet at multiple stations within an estuary. The number of stations varies depending on the size of the water body. After each tow, biologists sort, count, and measure all hard clams while noting any associated species. The data collected offers an accurate representation of the status and distribution of hard clams within the estuary, which helps to manage commercial and recreational fishing efforts, waterfront development plans, and restoration and enhancement efforts.

In the summer of 2024, the MRA completed its fifth sampling effort within Sandy Hook Bay, as part of a federally funded project, to characterize the shellfish habitat within the Raritan and Sandy Hook Bay complex. This estuary houses an important commercial hard clamming industry. All commercial clamming within this complex is processed through two depuration plants as the waters are less than approved for shellfish harvesting. Ongoing assessments and reported harvests within designated harvest zones enable the MRA to monitor populations and identify long-term trends in the status of this resource as well as changes to the estuarine habitat. Looking ahead, biologists intend to survey Raritan Bay in 2025 as the next part of this ongoing project.

Raritan-Sandy Hook Bay Complex Fishery Resource Inventory:

The Fishery Resource Inventory is a multi-gear project conducted monthly using an otter trawl, bagged seine, and multi-mesh gillnets. Each month, sampling stations are randomly selected for all gear types by depth and/or region, identifying and measuring each collected species. MRA staff does this to develop estimates of the abundance of

finfish and invertebrates, determine stock status and population changes, and characterize finfish and invertebrate communities within this complex for all size and age classes. This data can be used to assist with regional stock assessments and help aid fishery management. In the past three years, this project has collected just over 250,000 finfish and invertebrates, spanning 100 different species. The beach seine hauls collected the most fish of all three gear types and the top three species collected were Atlantic menhaden, Atlantic silversides, and bay anchovies. Along with housing species migrating from the south, such as Florida pompano and speckled swimming crab, the Raritan-Sandy Hook Bay Complex has shown to be an essential nursery ground for commercially and recreationally important species such as bluefish, winter flounder, black sea bass, and weakfish, which have been observed from the last three years of sampling.

Atlantic Coast

Ventless Trap Survey:

The Ventless Trap Survey, now in its tenth year, examines annual variation on the Sea Girt, Manasquan Inlet, Little Egg and Atlantic City reef sites. The survey includes two sites north and two sites south of Barnegat Inlet, the midway point of the state's ocean shoreline. Scientists are interested in characterizing seasonal and spatial changes in reef community composition and relative abundance of structure-associated species. The survey focuses on several commercial and recreational important species, including black sea bass, tautog (blackfish), and lobster, however, it also provides data on other important fish and crustacean species that occur on our reefs and naturally occurring structure. Results from the project are valuable for improving our ecological understanding of New Jersey's artificial reef habitats and help in the development of fishery management plans and informing ongoing projects as part of NJDEP's artificial reef program.

Survey objectives are to:

1. Characterize seasonal changes in fish and invertebrate communities between survey sites.

2. Evaluate possible differences in community composition and abundance between two of the most commonly used artificial reef materials: concrete-based structures (reef balls, castings, and demolition concrete) and metal structures.
3. Characterize the statistical distribution through catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) on hard and soft bottoms for the three target species and any other species captured in sufficient numbers.
4. Assess the influence of trap soak time on CPUE for the three target species and any other species captured in sufficient numbers.

Biologists have found significant differences in catch rates for several structure-dependent species when compared to traditional survey methods including trawls and hook and line, implying that this sampling method has a significant place in fisheries management. In turn, the artificial reef program will create and expand locally suitable artificial habitats that help to ensure the survivability of many species.

Blue Crab Pot Survey:

The Blue Crab Pot Survey collects abundance data on blue crabs and much more. Chesapeake-style crab pots are used containing different size bycatch reduction devices (BRDs). The devices control the size of the opening to the pot. Blue crabs are



Marine Fisheries staff measure the carapace of a blue crab.

plentiful throughout New Jersey's bays and rivers including Great Bay and the Mullica River, where the survey takes place, and are prized table fare for their sweet and tender meat. Crab pots catch more than just blue crabs: during the past year, staff captured 13 different types of sharks, fish, whelks, and turtles within deployed traps. Another important species caught is the diamondback terrapin, a non-game reptile species of special concern in New Jersey. A major goal of this survey is to maximize the blue crab fishery while obtaining additional data on diamondback terrapins.

Great Bay Yellow Eel Survey:

The Yellow Eel Survey collects an abundance of data on yellow-stage American eels. This survey supplements the glass eel survey by sampling additional life stages, determining suitable adult habitats, and providing valuable life cycle information. Commercial pots are used so that the data supplements commercial fishery sampling conducted by the MRA. While American eels are found in various habitats, from open ocean to freshwater, Great Bay has proven itself to be a sanctuary for eels. The abundance of small fish, insects, and mollusks makes this estuary an excellent home. At this stage of life, eels are commonly used as fishing bait; therefore, knowledge of the estuary and the population within is essential for proper fishery management. While catches vary, American eels are consistently present, and this remains a positive sign that eels continue to endure at a local habitat once they've entered Jersey waters.



An eel pot is tended during the Yellow Eel Survey.

Staff processing a haul of oysters aboard F/V Peter R. Paynter during an oyster transplant.



Ocean Trawl Stock Assessment Survey:

- Since 1988, this survey has sampled over 6,300 miles, about the distance from New York City to Cairo, Egypt, and has taken over 63,000 staff hours at sea, or over seven years, to survey that area.
- The survey has encountered nearly 300 unique species; 33 of which were only ever caught once and never encountered again.
- The most abundant species that have been encountered by weight are skates (211,000 pounds), dogfish (168,000 pounds), and searobins (38,000 pounds).

River Herring Assessment Survey:

- With the completion of the 2024 sampling year, the data collected from the Great Egg Harbor estuary now meets the minimum time series needed for stock assessment and management purposes.
- A total of 108 individual species have been collected on the Great Egg Harbor River since the survey began in 2015.

Glass Eel Survey:

- The largest single-day catch in the fyke net was 39,283 glass eels in March 2022.
- The smallest glass eel ever caught was 1.3 inches long and weighed 0.0001 pounds.
- Glass eel catches have been above average for the past four years (2000–2024).

Delaware Estuary

Oyster Reef Enhancement and Intermediate Transplant Programs

The MRA manages a sustainable, \$40+ million-dollar wild harvest oyster fishery within Delaware Bay. The fishery has a self-imposed per-bushel tax on its annual quota, which is used to fund restoration and enhancement programs. These programs include shell planting and oyster transplants managed by the MRA. Staff use stock assessment data to narrow down reef sites that require enhancement work and conduct sampling to determine suitable recipient sites for activities.

Barges are used to plant clean shell onto existing oyster reefs around the start of the oyster spawning season, typically in late June to early July. Planting shell is important because it provides more habitat for oyster larvae, known as spat, to set onto and build upon existing reefs. Areas, where these planting events have occurred, have been monitored for spat for years after shells have been planted.

The transplant program moves oysters from “transplant” reefs to “harvest” reefs. Specific oyster reefs are managed as transplant-only source reefs because salinities are lower, which causes slower growth and less marketable meat quality for the fishery. Vessels are hired to harvest oysters from these transplant regions and plant them onto market reefs selected by the MRA. This allows the fishery to utilize the entire resource and help supplement certain areas in need of assistance due to low natural recruitment or natural mortality events such as diseases that affect oysters and predation. The entire program aims to maintain sustainable fishing rates recommended by an independent stock assessment committee. Both programs have been shown to benefit the enhancement sites and the surrounding areas that bolster the oyster population and local fishery.

Juvenile Finfish Trawl Survey:

The Delaware Bay serves as spawning and feeding grounds, nursery areas, and migratory routes for many important recreational fish and invertebrates such as striped bass, weakfish, American shad, and blue crabs. The Juvenile Finfish Trawl Survey samples eleven stations from April to October. The total number of individuals, relative abundance, and length frequency are analyzed on an annual basis for all species collected.

In 2023, the index for all finfish collected showed an increase from that in 2022. The bay anchovy was the most abundant species collected during that year. Typically, bay anchovies, along with Atlantic croaker and weakfish, account for the majority of the total individuals collected. The success of a fishery will be contingent upon the survival of the early life stages and eventual recruitment into the adult populations. The recent index increase provides insight into the health of the Delaware Bay, demonstrating that estuarine-dependent finfish continue to utilize this important habitat.

Occasionally, some unique species will show up on the sorting table that are typically not seen in New Jersey's marine waters but are drawn to warmer water temperatures in late August through September. Some migrant species encountered throughout the years have included lookdowns, Florida pompanos, skillefish and more! Information collected by this survey provides timely and accurate estimates of relative abundance to resource managers, which is necessary to predict future fishery trends and harvest potential.



Biologists haul a net on the Delaware Bay Finfish Trawl Survey.

Striped Bass Recruitment Seine Survey:

- Since the survey's inception in 1980, the seine net has been hauled in nearly 10,000 times and caught over 1,500,000 fish.
- The survey is the MRA's longest-running fishery-independent survey.
- A total of 96 unique species have been identified during the survey.

Striped Bass Tagging Survey:

- Since 1989, MRA staff have tagged over 35,000 striped bass in Delaware Bay: 8,700 have been recaptured and reported.
- The longest amount of time between a striped bass tagged in Delaware Bay and recaptured is 7,075 days (over 19 years): staff tagged this fish on March 14, 1995, and it was recaptured off Block Island, RI on July 27, 2014.
- The largest amount of striped bass tagged in a single day was 579 fish on March 31, 1996.
- Striped bass tagged in Delaware Bay have been reportedly recaptured as far south as Onslow Bay, NC, and as far north as Sebasticook River in Winslow, ME.

River Herring Assessment Survey:

- A total of 75 individual species have been collected on the Maurice River since the survey began in 2013.
- Data from the Maurice River survey was used for the first time for management purposes in the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's 2024 Benchmark Stock Assessment for River Herring.

Horseshoe Crab Spawning Survey:

- Thanks to MRA partnerships, the survey samples 20 different beaches in New Jersey and Delaware.
- In 2024 across all beaches, a total of 167,544 horseshoe crabs were counted during sampling.

Acoustic Telemetry Monitoring Survey:

- Since 2012, the MRA has identified 1,190 unique tags in over 20 species including fish, sharks, sea turtles, and horseshoe crabs!
- Delaware Bay receivers detect many Southern species coming to pup or hang out during summer months, including sand tiger sharks, bull sharks, and cownose rays.

The **Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS)**, which conducts in-person interviews with recreational saltwater anglers, samples in all regions. Catch and effort data is used in stock assessments which aim to ensure healthy sustainable stocks.

In addition to field surveys, MRA biologists aim to protect New Jersey's coastal habitats by conducting thorough reviews of proposed in-water

construction. Project restrictions on timing and gear are implemented to protect the fragile habitats of many species. Staff serve as representatives on the **Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Habitat Committee** and work closely with the **Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership**. This collaborative initiative is dedicated to accelerating the conservation, protection, restoration and enhancement of habitats for native Atlantic coastal, estuarine-dependent, and diadromous fish species. They work to ensure healthy, thriving habitats capable of supporting all life stages of these fish along the Atlantic coast.

A healthy habitat provides the essential foundation for successful fisheries management.¹ Considering habitat in fishery management decisions is part of a newer assessment process called **ecosystem-based management**. This type of management allows biologists to consider all influences within the ecosystem as a whole, as opposed to traditional methods which only consider one fishery or species. Through conservative fishing regulations, habitat restoration, and protection projects, fish passage improvements, and other approaches, fisheries managers aim to protect vital fish habitats. All to leave New Jersey's saltwater species in a healthier state for future generations.

MRA Fisheries Biologist Contributors:

Peter Clarke, Nina Colagiovanni, Dani Dyson, Brendan Harrison, Andrew Hassall, Matt Heyl, Greg Hinks, Brian Neilan, Jen Pyle, Scott Stueber and Stacy VanMorter

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Species Profiles

Research conducted in various coastal habitats in New Jersey provides valuable data for stock assessments of numerous species. Continue reading to learn more about the important species highlighted in the surveys discussed on the previous pages.

American Eel (*Anguilla rostrata*)

Features: Brownish, greenish to black or gray above whitish belly. Slender, snake-like body. Small, pointed head. One long dorsal fin extends more than half of the body. One small gill slit before pectoral fin. Up to 60 inches long.

Habitat: Greenland to the Gulf States, Bahamas and Bermuda. Prefer shallow water in fresh or estuarine environments.

Behavior: Catadromous = Larval stage eels ascend freshwater streams and rivers in North America to live until sexually mature, when they migrate to the Sargasso Sea to spawn and die. Nocturnal foragers.



American Lobster (*Homarus americanus*)

Features: Olive-green or greenish-brown with orange, reddish or black speckles. Body cylindrical and smooth. Long antennae measure 2 inches and split in “Y” structures with pointed tips. Armed with asymmetrical pair of claws. Three pairs of walking legs. Grow to 25 inches and 44 pounds.

Habitat: Most abundant Maine and Massachusetts but found in offshore areas Maine through Virginia.

Behavior: Prefer cold, shallow water. Molt 25 times in their first 5–7 years. Feed on bottom dwelling fish and crustaceans. Can regenerate some parts of their body as needed: claws, legs and antennae.



Black Sea Bass (*Centropristis striata*)

Features: Blackish to gray on body and fins. Centers of scales white. Unpaired fins with white streaks and margins. Bars or dark stripes on sides. Caudal fin rounded with trailing filaments. Up to 2 feet and 9 pounds.

Habitat: Massachusetts to Florida. Rocky and soft bottoms around reefs, pilings and jetties.

Behavior: Hermaphroditic (all start out as females). Feed on invertebrates.



River Herring: Blueback and Alewife (*Alosa aestivalis* and *Alosa pseudoharengus*)

Features: Alewife – Grayish to bluish green dorsally. Sides and ventral area silvery with a dark spot behind the gill plate. Deep bodied with large eyes and white body cavity lining. Blueback – Dark blue fading to pale blue dorsally. Sides and ventral area silvery with a dark spot behind the gill plate. Moderately deep bodied with small eyes and black body cavity lining. Adults of both species range from 12–15 inches.

Habitat: Nova Scotia to South Carolina with bluebacks ranging as far south as the St. John River in Florida. Adults feed and overwinter in nearshore waters out to the continental shelf.

Behavior: Filter feeders. Anadromous spawners, adults migrate to coastal streams and rivers every spring to spawn in freshwater. Juveniles mature in freshwater nursery grounds and join the coastal migration in the fall.



Eastern Oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*)

Features: Bivalve, consisting of two shells attached at one end by a hinge and large muscle. Variable in shape. Pale white to gray shell. Shell has rough ridges or bumps. Average 3–5 inches.

Habitat: Ocean and estuarine waters from Gulf of St. Lawrence, Canada to the Gulf States. Abundant in shallow, saltwater bays, lagoons and estuaries.

Behavior: Filter feeders. One adult oyster can filter significant amounts of water each day. Found in water 8–25 feet deep. Intolerant to prolonged exposure to freshwater.



Hard Clam (*Mercenaria mercenaria*)

Features: Bivalve. Rounded shell with equal size halves hinged at one end. Gray to white. Concentric growth rings on outside of shell. Inside of shell white with violet marking. Can grow up to 5 inches.

Habitat: Canada to Florida. Most abundant between Cape Cod and New Jersey. Found in sand or muddy sand in bays and along ocean beaches.

Behavior: Grow quickly. May live 20–25 years. Prefer saltwater and cannot survive if salinity is too low.



Tautog (*Tautoga onitis*)

Features: Color varies with habitat. Shades of brownish or grayish green to blackish brown. Females and smaller fish mottled with irregular bars. Large males more uniformly colored with a pale blotch on each side. Can grow to 36 inches and over 25 pounds.

Habitat: Nova Scotia to South Carolina. Most common between Cape Cod and the Chesapeake Bay.

Behavior: Prefer to be near the bottom, around coastal rocks, pilings, artificial reefs and wrecks. Migratory. Long lived, up to 40 years old.



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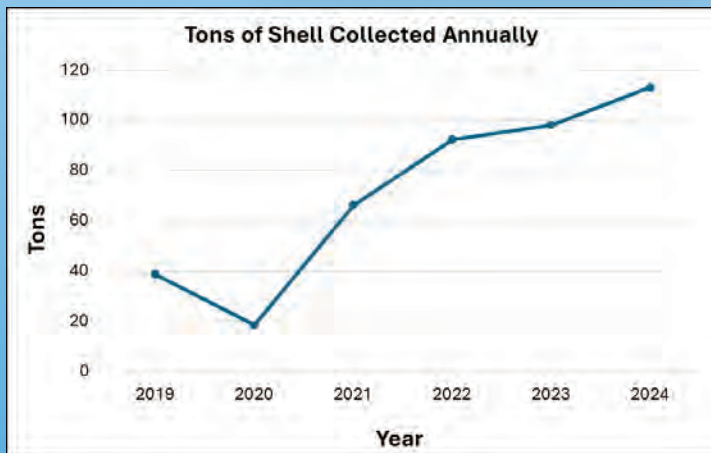
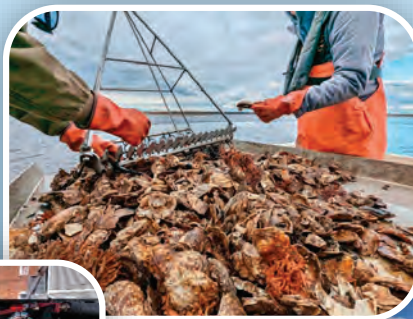
Returns each February to NJ Convention & Expo Center, Edison



Shell Recycling Program Expansion



Since 2019, the Marine Resources Administration has collected shell from restaurant partners in Atlantic City through the Shell Recycling Program. As a result of this effort, discarded shell otherwise destined for a landfill is repurposed to enhance local oyster reefs along New Jersey's Atlantic coast. Oysters early in their life cycle require a hard substrate to attach to. Without such surfaces available for larvae to settle on, an oyster populations sustainability could be at risk. With shell being a limited resource that is often diverted for other purposes, shell recycling helps provide the substrate that oyster populations need to grow and succeed. Initial efforts have focused on the Mullica River oyster reefs, home to one of the last self-sustaining oyster populations on the Atlantic coast. These reefs are resilient, overcoming disease, freshwater intrusion and the impacts associated with climate change, making them the ideal candidate for expansion.



To date the program has collected over 400 tons of recycled shell from the greater Atlantic City area through weekly collections from 12 restaurant partners. Thanks to a recent grant award from NOAA's Coastal Zone Management Program, the Shell Recycling Program is set to expand into the rest of Atlantic and Cape May counties. The program aims to add a minimum of 15 additional restaurant partners over the next three years, along with three public drop-off locations, allowing those who consume shellfish at home to do their part.

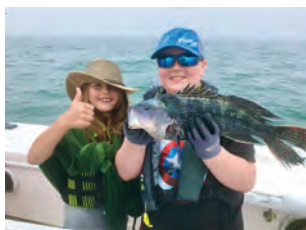
The addition of restaurant partners and drop off locations will enhance shell planting efforts within the Mullica River oyster reefs, planting 25,000 bushels (approximately 700 tons) annually. This plan will more than double largest planting to date which occurred last summer when 10,000 bushels were planted. With additional funding, the MRA introduced an educational component to the program within local schools to expose students to the marine sciences, collaborating with educators to provide learning opportunities at an early age while fostering a sense of environmental stewardship.





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Regulations in **red** are new this year.

Regulations remain in effect until changed. For the most current regulations, go to dep.nj.gov/njfw/fishing/marine/seasons-and-regulations/.

Highlights of Regulation Changes:

- The recreational cobia regulations have been modified to a possession limit of 2 fish per vessel with a minimum size limit of 43 inches. The open season of January 1–December 31 remains unchanged.

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. Saltwater anglers must comply with the requirements of the New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry Program. See page 22.

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. Anglers are encouraged to report all fishing activity after each trip. Visit NJDEP Fish & Wildlife's Volunteer Angler Survey at dep.nj.gov/njfw/fishing/marine/volunteer-angler-survey/.

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.

Delaware Fishing License Requirement

A Delaware fishing license is required for all non-resident anglers aged 16 and over fishing either fresh or tidal waters of Delaware. Delaware fishing license information can be found at <https://dnrec.alpha.delaware.gov/fish-wildlife/licenses/>.

New York Fishing Registry Requirement

New York offers a free registry to all marine anglers fishing in New York. Visit dec.ny.gov/permits/54950.html.

Bait Fish

No license is required to take bait fish for personal use with the following gear:

1. Dip nets 24 inches diameter or less for taking Atlantic herring only for live bait. The taking or possession of river herring (alewife and blueback herring) is prohibited.
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.

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

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

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.

Spearfishing

Spearfishing 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.

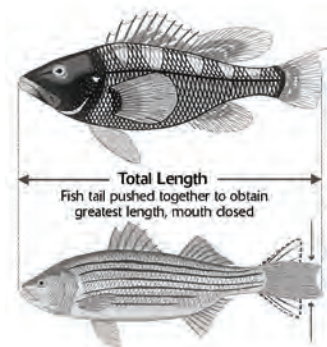
Filleting

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 18. Anglers shall possess no parts of any fish caught on a previous fishing trip. Party boats may fillet fish at sea if they obtain a Special Fillet Permit available from NJDEP Fish & Wildlife's Marine Resources Administration.

Be the First to Know! Get on the List

The Marine Fisheries and Shellfish e-mail lists, that is. Get the latest information on NJDEP Fish & Wildlife events, public hearings and other marine resource issues. Our ten other lists help you get the most out of New Jersey's fish and wildlife resources. Sign up today at: dep.nj.gov/njfw/education/email-lists/

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
- Diamondback terrapin
- Shortnose sturgeon
- River herring (alewife and blueback herring; see herring illustrations, page 15)
- Various shark species (See Sharks on page 19)

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.

Sea Turtles & Marine Mammals

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

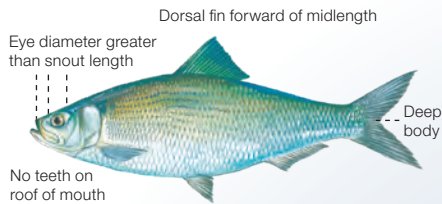
Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact

Beware!

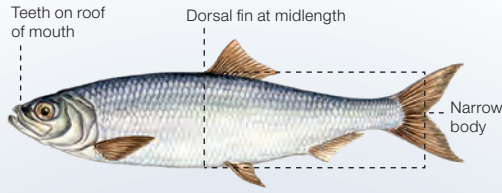
New Jersey participates in the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact, which means that a violator with repeat convictions of New Jersey marine fishing laws may face license suspensions in participating states.



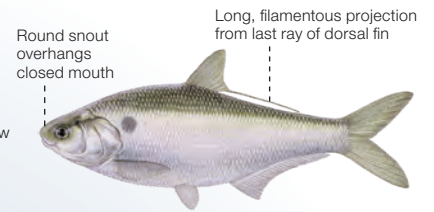
Herring



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.



Atlantic Bonito



Atlantic Croaker



Atlantic Mackerel



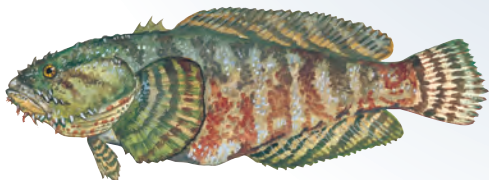
Northern Kingfish



Northern Puffer



Northern Seabroin



Oyster Toadfish



Spot



White Perch









State Size and Possession Limits

FINFISH

Regulations in **red** are new this year.

2025 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](https://njfishandwildlife.com). Regulations in **red** are new this year. See page 14 for how to measure fish. **Note:** No species of fish with a minimum size limit listed below may be filleted or cleaned at sea. Party boats licensed to carry 15 or more passengers may apply for a permit to fillet these species. See also *Summer Flounder*, page 18.

		Open Season	Minimum Length (total length except sharks)	Harvest & Possession Limit (per person unless noted)	Remarks
AMERICAN EEL					
		No Closed Season	9"	25 ^a	a: Except 50 fish harvest/possession limit for party/ charter boat employees.
BLACK DRUM					
		No Closed Season	16"	3	
BLACK SEA BASS					
		May 17–June 19	12.5"	10	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 filament.
		July 1–Aug 31	12.5"	1	
		Oct 1–Oct 31	12.5"	10	
		Nov 1–Dec 31	12.5"	15	
BLUEFISH					
		No Closed Season	None	5 fish per person while fishing from a party/charter vessel ^b 3 fish per person for all other anglers	b: vessel must have a valid federal party/charter permit and be captained by a properly credentialed operator with a valid US Coast Guard endorsement. More information at dep.nj.gov/wp-content/uploads/njfw/bluefish4hire.pdf
COBIA					
		No Closed Season	43"	2 fish per vessel	
COD, ATLANTIC					
		Jan 1–May 31 and Sept 1–Dec 31	23"	5	Please check website for possible Atlantic cod regulation changes during 2025: dep.nj.gov/njfw/fishing/marine/ seasons-and-regulations/
HADDOCK					
		No Closed Season	18"	No Limit	
POLLOCK					
		No Closed Season	19"	No Limit	

	Open Season	Minimum Length (total length except sharks)	Harvest & Possession Limit (per person unless noted)	Remarks
--	-------------	---	---	---------

RED DRUM



No Closed Season

18" to less than 27"

1

RIVER HERRING



Blueback Herring



Alewife

No Open Season

None

0

The taking or possession of any river herring in New Jersey is prohibited.

SCUP (PORGY)



Jan 1–June 30
Sept 1–Dec 31

10"

30

SHAD



American Shad



Hickory Shad

Delaware River &
tributaries

No Closed Season

None

6 (maximum of 2
American shad)

All other marine
waters

No Closed Season

None

6 (no American
shad may be
harvested or pos-
sessed)

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"–31"

1

Delaware River &
tributaries
(upstream of Calhoun
St. Bridge)

March 1–Dec 31

28"–31"

1

Atlantic Ocean
(0–3 nautical miles
from shore)

No Closed Season

28"–31"

1

All other marine
waters
3–200 nautical
miles
(Federal waters)

March 1–Dec 31

28"–31"

1

Prohibited

X

0

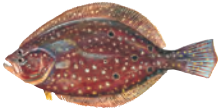



No person may take, attempt to take, or have in possession any striped bass from closed waters. Anglers participating in the Striped Bass Bonus Program may harvest one striped bass per permit at 24" to less than 28" in length from May 15 to December 31. It is illegal to take, attempt to take, catch or 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. Sale of striped bass in New Jersey is prohibited.

Note: It is illegal to gaff or attempt to gaff, any striped bass at any time. Non-offset circle hooks are required when fishing with bait. See page 5 for more information.

State Size and Possession Limits

FINFISH

Regulations in **red** are new this year.

		Open Season	Minimum Length (total length except sharks)	Harvest & Possession Limit (per person unless noted)	Remarks
SUMMER FLOUNDER (FLUKE)					
	All waters except those mentioned below	May 4–Sept 25	18"	3	c: Applies to Delaware Bay and tributaries, west of COLREGS line delineating Delaware Bay from Atlantic Ocean but does not include waters of Cape May Canal east of Cape May Ferry Terminal. Transport of summer flounder caught in Delaware Bay, greater than or equal to 17" but less than 18", may occur in waters east of Cape May Ferry Terminal to George Redding Bridge (Route 47) located at entrance of Wildwood provided all fishing gear aboard the vessel is stowed with rigs removed; vessel may not stop to fish for any species. d: Shore-based fishing is defined as fishing from a pier, jetty, beach, bank or marsh. Note: 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. Anglers shall not be in possession of any parts of any summer flounder caught on a previous fishing trip; only fish just caught on the current outing.
	Delaware Bay & tributaries ^c	May 4–Sept 25	17"	3	
	Island Beach State Park, shore fishing ^d	May 4–Sept 25	16"	2	
TAUTOG (BLACKFISH)					
		Jan 1–Feb 28	15"	4	
		April 1–April 30	15"	4	
		Aug 1–Nov 15	15"	1	
		Nov 16–Dec 31	15"	5	
WEAKFISH					
		No Closed Season	13"	1	
WINTER FLOUNDER					
		March 1–Dec 31	12"	2	

Quick Reference for Popular Fish!

For New Jersey's most popular recreational species, see the quick reference chart of open seasons and regulations: dep.nj.gov/wp-content/uploads/njfw/recreational-seasons-summary-chart-2025.pdf



DEP Action Line, 24 Hrs.

The Department has a toll-free telephone hotline number you can use to report environmental incidents, abuses, and complaints in New Jersey.

(877) WARN-DEP
(877) 927-6337

SHARKS



Fork Length

Shark image courtesy of
Dr. William Driggers, III/NMFS

	Open Season	Minimum Length (fork length)	Harvest & Possession Limit (per person unless noted)	Remarks
Aggregated large coastal group	Jan 1–May 14 and July 16–Dec 31	Atlantic sharpnose, bonnethead, and smoothhound: None Hammerheads 78" All other retainable sharks: 54"	Prohibited sharks: Zero allowed possession Shortfin mako: Zero allowed possession Smoothhound: No limit All others: One per person per trip	Use of non-offset, corrodible, non-stainless steel circle hooks is required, except when fishing with flies or artificial lures. Does not include dogfish. See below for a list of prohibited species.
Hammerhead group				
Non-blacknose small coastal group	No Closed Season			
Blacknose group	No Closed Season			
Pelagic group	No Closed Season			

Sharks

Some species of sharks may be harvested by recreational fishermen from the shore or from a boat only by hand line or rod and reel. If a shark is caught but not kept, it must be released immediately. Anglers should access the following National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration website, [fisheries.noaa.gov/resources/outreach-materials](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resources/outreach-materials), to download helpful materials such as the NOAA Fisheries *Shark Identification Placard* and the *Careful Catch and Release Brochure*, which provide a pictorial guide to identifying sharks and tips on handling and releasing large saltwater pelagic fish.

All sharks harvested must have heads, tails and fins attached naturally to the carcass until landed, although anglers may still gut and bleed the carcass. Filleting sharks at sea is prohibited. Refer to the illustration, above, for the proper measurement of fork length.

New Jersey's shark regulations complement existing federal shark regulations. However, the following additional measures are required for state waters:

- In state waters, there is no minimum size limit for non-blacknose small coastal sharks and blacknose 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 Aggregated Large Coastal and Hammerhead groups will have a closed season within state waters from May 15 through July 15 to protect spawning female sharks during the pupping season.

It is required to use non-offset, corrodible, non-stainless steel circle hooks, except when fishing with flies or artificial lures, when fishing for sharks recreationally.

Note: To differentiate sharks from dogfish—dogfish have flat, tiny teeth; spiny dogfish have dorsal spines in front of the dorsal fins. Neither are present in other sharks.

Shark Species That May Be Kept (Authorized Species): Aggregated Large Coastal Shark—blacktip, bull, lemon, nurse, tiger, spinner; Hammerhead Shark—scalped hammerhead, smooth hammerhead, great hammerhead; Non-Blacknose Small Coastal Shark—Atlantic sharpnose, bonnethead, finetooth; Blacknose Shark—blacknose; Pelagic Shark—blue, porbeagle, 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, oceanic whitetip, sandbar, sand tiger, sevengill, silky, sixgill, smalltail, whale and white.

Federal Recreational Fishing Regulations

For current federal waters regulations (3–200 nautical miles), refer to the following agencies:

- NOAA Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Information: [fisheries.noaa.gov/topic/atlantic-highly-migratory-species](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/topic/atlantic-highly-migratory-species)
- NOAA Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Permit Shop: hmspermits.noaa.gov/
- Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council: [mafmc.org/regulations](https://www.mafmc.org/regulations)
- South Atlantic Fishery Management Council: [safmc.net/regulations/](https://www.safmc.net/regulations/)

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State Size and Possession Limits

CRUSTACEANS & MOLLUSKS

Regulations in **red** are new this year.

		Open Season	Minimum Length (total length except sharks)	Harvest & Possession Limit (per person unless noted)	Remarks
LOBSTER, AMERICAN					
		See below for closed seasons	3 3/8"	6	A person shall not use any spear, gig, gaff or other penetrating device as a method of capture of lobsters.
BLUE CRAB					
	peeler or shedder	No Closed Season ^e	3"	1 Bushel	e: Unless using non-collapsible, Chesapeake-style crab pots, trot lines or crab dredges — see below for additional information.
	soft	No Closed Season ^e	3 1/2"		
	hard	No Closed Season ^e	4 1/2"		
HARD CLAM					
		No Closed Season ^f	1 1/2"	150 clams	f: Non-resident license valid only June–Sept. See water classification chart information at https://www.state.nj.us/dep/wms/bmw/nssphome.html

Crustaceans

American Lobster

The legal possession size limit 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 in Lobster Management Area 4 from April 30–May 31 and Lobster Management Area 5 from February 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 below.

Special Lobster Restrictions:

No person shall use, leave, deploy, or tend any lobster, fish or conch pot within an artificial reef located in state waters except in areas designated as a full access zones. Within these designated full access zones lobster, fish and conch pots shall be used, left, deployed or tended only between sunrise and sunset.

For information about lobster pot deployment and New Jersey Reef Full Access Zone Locations, go to dep.nj.gov/wp-content/uploads/njfw/marine-letter-lobster.pdf

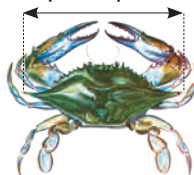
The use of spears, gigs, gaffs or other penetrating devices as a method of capture for lobsters is prohibited. A recreational lobster pot license is required to use pots or traps to capture lobsters. For details call (609) 748-2020. Lobsters taken recreationally may not be sold or offered for sale.



Blue 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
- 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 9-digit identification number (CID) 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 or a law enforcement officer may raise or remove contents of a legally set fishing device.

Measure crabs point to point.



- Crabs taken with a bait seine may be retained for personal use only if the angler 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 30.
- 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.: Cohansey 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.
- Crab Dredge Seasons:** Delaware Bay and tributaries: Jan. 1 through April 15 and Nov. 15 through Dec. 31. All other waters: Jan. 1 through March 31, Dec. 1 through Dec. 31. 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.

Crab Pot License Information

Recreational Crab Pot/Trot Line Licenses and Non-Commercial Crab Dredge Licenses are available for purchase online at: <https://nj.aspirafocus.com/internetsales> or at any NJDEP Fish & Wildlife-certified license agents. For the most current list of NJDEP Fish & Wildlife-certified license agents, go to dep.nj.gov/njfw/licenses-and-permits/license-agents/

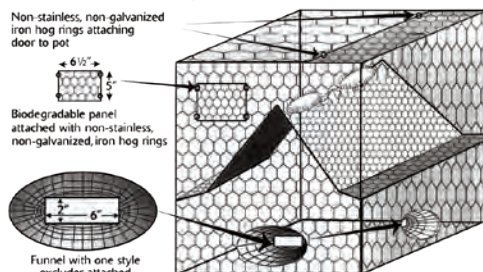
- **Recreational crab pot/trot line license:** \$2
Harvest limit: one bushel per day. Refer to the shellfish regulations on page 20 for all recreational crabbing regulations.
- **Non-commercial crab dredge license:** \$15
Harvest limit: one bushel per day during the crab dredge season. See page 20 for recreational crab regulations.

Terrapin Excluders and Biodegradable Panels Are Required on Chesapeake-Style Crab Pots

NOTE: It is illegal to catch or take diamondback terrapins in New Jersey. Users of non-collapsible, Chesapeake-style crab pots note: 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. 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 allowing these and other species to escape 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 note: ALL non-collapsible, Chesapeake-style crab pots MUST be licensed and marked with the 9-digit identification number (CID) of the owner.

Chesapeake-Style Crab Pot

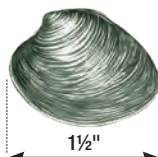


Mollusks

1. All persons must be licensed to harvest any shellfish. See *Shellfish License Information*. Shellfish means any species of benthic mollusks (except conch) including hard and soft clams, oysters, surf clams, bay scallops and mussels.
2. 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. Charts are updated annually.
3. 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.
4. Harvesting shellfish on public grounds is restricted to the use of hand implements.
5. 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 NJDEP Fish & 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

1. No holder of any recreational shellfish license may take more than a total of 150 shellfish (in aggregate) per day. See *Shellfish License Information*.
2. It is illegal to dredge shellfish on public grounds. Use of hand implements are the only legal harvest methods.
3. The minimum size of hard clams that may be harvested is 1½ inches in length. Clams less than 1½ 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.
4. 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.




Shellfish License Information

A shellfish license (formerly called clamming license) is required for harvesting all species of benthic mollusks (except 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.

For shellfishing regulations, see page 20. **Prior to harvesting any shellfish, you must consult the Shellfish Growing Water Classification Charts** published by DEP's Bureau of Marine Water Monitoring, available at shellfish license agents, state shellfish offices, online at nj.gov/dep/bmw/nssphome.html#charts or call Marine Water Monitoring at (609) 748-2000. Purchase shellfish licenses online at nj.aspirafocus.com/internetsales.

Shellfish License Fees

- **Resident recreational shellfish:** \$10
Harvest limit: 150 shellfish (in aggregate) per day. Sale of catch prohibited.
- **Non-resident recreational shellfish:** \$20
Harvest limit: 150 shellfish (in aggregate) per day. Sale of catch prohibited. License valid only during 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 only to certified dealers.
- **Resident senior citizen recreational shellfish license:** FREE lifetime license (\$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. To become certified, call (609) 984-6213. 

Shellfish and Non-Commercial Crab Pot License Agents

Current listing now available online at dep.nj.gov/njfw/licenses-and-permits/license-agents/

Note: All license agents statewide can now sell all license and permit privileges.

New Jersey Saltwater Recreational Registry Program (NJSRRP)



Image courtesy Ray Ringen



*Sample 2025 NJ Saltwater Registry Certificate

Recreational Saltwater Anglers

Before heading out to enjoy one of New Jersey's treasured resources, be aware of saltwater fishing requirements and regulations.

Register. It's free and required!

The Saltwater Registry is meant to be a current contact list for mail and telephone surveys. Participation in the NJ Saltwater Recreational Registry Program (NJSRRP) is vital in achieving accurate recreational fishing estimates, helping to ensure healthy fisheries for generations to come and to better account for the contributions and impacts of saltwater anglers on coastal economies. Do your part to help maintain sustainable fisheries and join the thousands of other anglers who have already registered with the NJ Saltwater Recreational Registry Program.

- Anyone 16 and older must register before saltwater fishing recreationally in New Jersey.
- If 18 or older, a driver's license, state issued id, passport, Visa or alike is required.
- Anglers 18 or older must fill out the Child Support Certification form annually.
- All for-hire owners and captains must register each recreational saltwater fishing vessel they own or run under their name. It is not necessary for one individual to register as both the captain and owner—once is sufficient.

- Anglers are reminded that registrations expire at the end of each calendar year and must be renewed annually.

* For more information on the **NJ Saltwater Recreational Registry Program**, visit saltwaterregistry.nj.gov or contact Marine Fisheries staff by emailing saltwaterregistry@dep.nj.gov with any questions.



Child Support Certification Requirement

The Child Support Program Improvement Act requires NJDEP Fish & Wildlife to collect and maintain Social Security numbers and child support obligation certification for all license and registration applications. Certifications must be completed prior to a customer's first purchase each license year regardless of whether the purchase is made online or at a license agent. Saltwater Registrations are **ONLY** available online.

If your first purchase of the year is at a License Agent then the customer must be present to complete the Child Support Certification in person. The online child support certification allows an individual to complete the form from the privacy of their home. Once done, the certification remains valid for the calendar year in which the certification was completed. When the child support form is completed online the customer does not need to be present at the license agent for a purchase to be made on or for their behalf.

NJDEP Fish & Wildlife Website

Visit the NJDEP Fish & Wildlife Website to access saltwater fishing regulations, management updates, public hearing information, data collected from field surveys and more:

dep.nj.gov/njfw/fishing/marine



Marine Fisheries: Recreational Surveys

Be Counted...

You may see NJDEP Fish & Wildlife interviewers at marine public access fishing sites conducting the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (APAIS). The survey targets marine recreational anglers to obtain information about their fishing effort and catch. The more data collected, the more successful the survey becomes for estimating overall catch, which is an integral factor for managing fisheries.

Marine Fisheries staff are eager to speak with fishing clubs/groups about the importance of the APAIS. We rely heavily on our valued anglers, creating a joint effort to preserve the state's natural resources. Invite us to a group meeting or event. Contact Maryellen Gordon at Maryellen.Gordon@dep.nj.gov. We look forward to meeting you!

NJDEP Fish & Wildlife staff continue to conduct the For-Hire Telephone Survey annually from March through December. Weekly calls are made to vessel operators regarding the previous week's trips. This data is used to estimate fishing effort in the for-hire sector and is combined with APAIS data. 2,142 vessels were contacted averaging approximately 50 vessels per week with just over a 46.9% response rate during 2024.

If you're not contacted directly while out fishing, you can submit an easy, online fishing report after each saltwater trip to the Recreational Saltwater Volunteer Angler Survey at dep.nj.gov/njfw/fishing/marine/volunteer-angler-survey/. Your reports have a *real* impact on how our oceans are managed.

APAIS Totals 2024

Month	Site Assignments	Charter Intercepts	Private/Rental Intercepts	Shore Intercepts	Total Intercepts
March	60	0	6	65	71
April	91	15	237	120	372
May	177	71	320	338	729
June	176	97	481	406	984
July	182	121	516	644	1,281
August	181	159	583	384	1,126
September	167	49	246	237	532
October	166	92	342	286	720
November	154	94	489	273	856
December	141	32	93	33	158
	1,495	730	3,313	2,786	6,829

* Out of 1495 assignments, NJ completed 1473. There were 22 assignments cancelled due to weather emergencies and/or lack of availability.



NOAA
FISHERIES

Your **Data** Makes a
Difference

How and Why We Collect Information About Your Recreational Catch

NOAA Fisheries works closely with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to gather recreational fishing data from anglers like you.

Our understanding of saltwater recreational total catch depends on complete and accurate information provided by recreational anglers.

The less survey information we have, the less certain we are of the quality of our catch estimates, which could result in more conservative fishing regulations.

Taking a few minutes to share information about your fishing trip via our in-person shoreside catch survey and our mail effort survey is **one of the most important contributions you can make** to help balance optimal fishing opportunities with the protection of marine resources.

Please note: Field interviewers play no role in law enforcement. We value your privacy and any personal information collected is kept confidential.

Photo: NJ Department of Environmental Protection



How We Use Your Data

NOAA Fisheries collects catch and trip data from **thousands of New Jersey anglers** and for-hire captains to produce estimates of total catch for many species.



These estimates **complement other data**, such as **commercial catch**, **biological information**, and **direct observations of fish stocks**.

Stock assessment scientists evaluate this data to determine the **health of our fisheries**.



Working with **anglers and other partners**, federal and state fisheries managers use this information to make informed fisheries management plans and decisions.

We work with regional and state partners to **review catch estimates before they are published on our website**. The estimates are broken down by species, state, region, and type of fishing (shore, private boat, for-hire vessel).



countmyfish.noaa.gov

Motor Boat Registration & Title Requirements and Boating Safety Information

Registration

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

- All titled boats must be registered.
- **Any boat (including jet skis and non-titled watercraft), mechanically propelled (including 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 that do not need to 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 Safety Certificate (NJSP)

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

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.)

PFD Requirements

Between November 1 and May 1, no operator of a recreational vessel less than 26 feet, shall permit its operation unless each person on board is wearing a securely fastened US Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device. For details, visit https://nj.gov/njsp/marine-services/current_events.shtml

For More Information:

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

New Jersey State Police (NJSP)
(609) 882-2000
njsp.org/marine-services

Vibrio: What you should know

Stay safe and healthy at the shore this and every summer by being aware that with higher water temperatures comes an increased chance of illness from *Vibrio*, a naturally occurring bacteria found in warm, salty marine waters. Although *Vibrio* can infect anyone, individuals with compromised immune systems are more likely to experience illness. Contracting *Vibrio* can occur by subjecting open wounds (recent cuts, piercings, tattoos, etc.) to marine waters or eating raw or undercooked seafood.

Enjoy New Jersey's beautiful beaches and variety of seafood but if you're immunocompromised, please follow these tips:

- Stay out of salt or brackish water
- Cover wounds with waterproof bandages
- Wear proper foot protection to prevent cuts caused by shells and rocks
- Wear protective gloves when handling raw seafood
- Know that you have a higher risk of illness when eating raw or undercooked seafood and shellfish
- Beware of cross-contamination
- Discard any shellfish with open shells before cooking and those that don't open during cooking
- Seek medical attention if you have a wound that is swollen, red, or feels hot to the touch after exposure to seawater, raw seafood or its juices



YOUR DOLLARS MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

State and Federal partnership improves NJ's fishing opportunities



Your fees and Sport Fish Restoration dollars produce the following benefits:

- Management of public waters
- Artificial reef development
- Marine sport fish research
- Development and management of public fishing areas
- Creation of aquatic education programs
- Development and maintenance of boating-associated access facilities throughout the state



When you purchase fishing equipment, motors, sonar and motorboat fuel in New Jersey, excise tax dollars — paid by manufacturers of that equipment — come back to New Jersey to support marine fisheries!

This is the federal Sport Fish Restoration Program!



Interactive Map Tools

NJDEP Fish & Wildlife's **Office of Fish and Wildlife Information Systems** develops and maintains geographic information systems (GIS) data, produces web mapping applications and provides GIS/IT assistance to support fish and wildlife management throughout New Jersey. Below is a listing of the online interactive mapping tools that allow access to spatial information, and in some cases, the ability to submit data or observations directly to NJDEP Fish & Wildlife.

Saltwater Fishing Explorer Application

Provides interactive maps and more information on artificial reef sites and other saltwater fishing opportunities in New Jersey.
njfishandwildlife.com/saltwaterfishing



Artificial Reef Deployments Application

Allows users to identify artificial reefs and individual deployments present on reef sites providing excellent fishing and diving opportunities. This application includes nearly 4,000 publicly accessible artificial reef deployments ranging from ships, barges and military vehicles to concrete habitats and dredge rock. These deployments provide areas for the public to engage in reef fishing and diving. Information includes type of deployment, the material it was made from, who sponsored the deployment, the date it was deployed, along with the location and volume of the deployment.



NJFishandWildlife.com/reefdeployments

Reef Deployment Feedback Form

Allows users to submit single or multiple corrections to deployments. Each advised correction will be reviewed by staff and included in the next revision.

Reef Deployment Feedback Form NJFishandWildlife.com/reeffeedback



Saltwater Fishing Opportunities Application



Provides the public with key information of areas to fish throughout New Jersey for saltwater species like striped bass, bluefish, and summer flounder. Includes both ocean prime fishing grounds and shore-based fishing access sites.

NJFishandWildlife.com/primesaltwaterfishing

HUNTERS and ANGLERS: Know Before You Go!

Two separate fish and wildlife convictions for violating any New Jersey saltwater, freshwater, trapping or hunting law within a five-year period will cause you to lose your hunting and fishing privileges for two to five-years! This means convictions for taking undersized striped bass or over limit striped bass in marine waters can prevent you from hunting!

Wildlife management area violations such as possession of alcohol, swimming, ATV use and illegal dumping also fall under fish and wildlife offenses and can result in license revocation.

Don't take a chance on losing your license because you heard the wrong information!

If you have any questions regarding hunting or fishing regulations, please call your regional Fish and Wildlife Law Enforcement office before going in the field.

The overwhelming majority of New Jersey hunters, trappers and anglers are ethical, law-abiding citizens with a low tolerance for those not willing to follow the laws. If you see a violation occurring, report it immediately by calling 1-(877) WARN-DEP.

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Skillful Angler Program

RECOGNITION PROGRAMS

New Jersey Skillful Angler Program

The Skillful Angler Program is designed both to supplement the New Jersey Record Fish Program and to acknowledge 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. 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.

Saltwater species taken from a boat must have been caught from a boat that left from, and returned to, a New Jersey port during the same trip. Anglers can now submit their application and photo(s) electronically! Program rules and steps to enter are found here dep.nj.gov/njfw/fishing/freshwater/skillful-angler-program/. Anglers qualifying for a Skillful Angler award receive a certificate along with a **Skillful Angler patch** as a testament to their achievement.

The Program has three main divisions: **Adult** (for anglers age 16 and older), **Junior** (under age 16) and **Catch and Release** (based on length). A clear, side-view photo, alongside a ruler that allows accurate species identification and measurement verification, must be included with each application. Additional good quality (and high resolution) photos with the angler are welcome and appreciated.

The Skillful Angler Program recognizes different levels of fishing expertise. An angler who submits five applications of qualifying size for the same species will receive a Specialist Certificate. An angler who submits five applications of qualifying fish of different species will receive a Master Certificate. Catch 10 or more qualifying fish within the year, and the angler will earn an Elite Angler Certificate. Since 2024, catch 10 or more qualifying fish of different species and the angler will receive a Grandmaster Certificate!

For new anglers, the Program also recognizes your first fish caught no matter the age of the angler. Qualified anglers will receive a First Fish certificate. Four additional categories may bring out your competitive nature. Personalized certificates are also awarded for the Slam Series, which includes:

- **Inshore Slam I** — catch one each qualifying Striped Bass, Bluefish, and Fluke

Minimum Entry Requirements:

Species	Adult Weight (lbs., oz.)	Junior Weight (lbs., oz.)	Catch & Release (inches)
Black Sea Bass	4	3	20
Striped Bass	n/a	n/a	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
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 (see page 28) requires a different application and is based on weight alone. Scale certification documentation and a weighmaster's signature are required for State Record Fish entries. Other rules apply. Visit Fish and Wildlife's website at dep.nj.gov/njfw/fishing/freshwater/new-jersey-state-record-fish-program/ for a complete list of current state records.

- **Inshore Slam II** — catch one each qualifying Black Sea Bass, Tautog, and Weakfish
- **Offshore Pelagic Slam** — catch one each qualifying Bluefin Tuna, Bigeye Tuna, Yellowfin Tuna, and Dolphin
- **Marlin Slam** — catch one each qualifying White and Blue Marlin

Each month, the leaders of each category and species will be posted on our Skillful Angler Leader Board webpage — dep.nj.gov/njfw/fishing/freshwater/skillful-angler-leaderboards/. 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/her accomplishment, along with a **winner's patch**, 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. For catch and release categories, the fish must be measured and photographed alongside a ruler. For Adult/Junior Division, fish must be weighed and measured by a fishing license agent, tackle shop or authorized Fish and Wildlife fisheries biologist.

Anglers must submit a photograph of the fish caught, alongside a ruler, for clear identification and measurement verification. Be sure the ruler markings are legible. Please also include an attractive, well-composed, high-resolution (large file size) photo to be considered for printing in this Digest. *Smile!* All photos become the property of NJDEP Fish & Wildlife and may be used for promotional purposes.

To apply, go to: dep.nj.gov/njfw/fishing/freshwater/skillful-angler-program/ 

Did You Know?

Email your entry and photo from any device!

NJSkillfulAngler@dep.nj.gov

Operation Game Thief — Over the Limit & Undersized Tautog

In early November 2024, following up on numerous complaints of anglers taking undersized and over the daily limit of Tautog (Blackfish), CPO Bahrle observed a group of fishermen with several large coolers coming off the jetty in Barnegat Light State Park.

Upon inspection, the fishermen were found with 61 Tautog, of which 57 were less than the minimum size limit of 15 inches. Each fisherman was issued court-mandatory summonses for

possessing over-limit and undersized Tautog. The fishermen face penalties of \$100 per fish for each charge. The Tautog were donated to a local food bank.

Calls to (855) OGT-TIPS can be about any violation of NJ's laws protecting wildlife. Through the Operation Game Thief program, you can help NJ's Conservation Police Officers defend our living natural resources, and if the information you provide results in a conviction, you may earn a reward too.



**Operation Game Thief:
(855) OGT-TIPS**



NEW JERSEY STATE FEDERATION OF SPORTSMEN'S CLUBS

The Federation is the state-wide organization created by statute in 1935 through which hunters, anglers, trappers and other volunteer conservationists work together, with federal and state government and NJ's professional biologists, on vital issues involving NJ's outdoors. We offer members a voice in outdoors management, personal liability insurance, and the fellowship of like-minded men and women who get things done. We are organized by county and region. To find your county's chapter, visit our website. And become a member too.

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Accessible Fishing Sites



For people with disabilities, visit: dep.nj.gov/njfw/wp-content/uploads/njfw/wcaccesslist.pdf

An Accessible Fishing Sites list is available to assist anglers whose mobility is impaired.

All sites are wheelchair-accessible except for the Musconetcong River in Morris County, where vehicle access is to the shoreline.



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State Record Marine Sport Fish

RECOGNITION PROGRAMS



Dominic Vricella was fishing east of the Manasquan Inlet where he landed the new state record King Mackerel on July 30, 2023. The fish weighed 67-pounds, 7.2-ounces, replacing the previous record of 54-pound, 0-ounce from 1998. Dominic was trolling in his boat using a trolling rod and conventional reel with 20-pound braided line and a spoon for the lure when the new record King Mackerel hit.

NJDEP Fish & 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 75 marine species eligible for entry into the program, which includes a new spearfishing category with 16 additional species.


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.

Fourteen species are now retired from the list of program-eligible fish, but remain on a separate list posted on NJDEP Fish & Wildlife's website. 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 NJDEP Fish & 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. Please include an attractive, well-composed, high-resolution (large file size) photo to be considered for printing in this *Digest*. **Smile!**

For a complete list of state record fish, including retired species, or to print an application with complete program rules, visit NJDEP Fish & Wildlife's website at dep.nj.gov/njfw/fishing/freshwater/new-jersey-state-record-fish-program/ 

New Jersey State Record Marine Fish

New records shown in red. * Fish was certified by the IGFA as a world record.

Species	Lbs.	Oz.	Year	Angler	Where Caught
Amberjack, greater	85	0	1993	Edwin Metzner	Off Cape May
Bass, black sea	9	0	2015	Steve Singler	Atlantic Ocean
Bass, striped	See retired species list: NJFishandWildlife.com/recfish-salt.htm				
Bluefish	27	1	1997	Roger Kastorsky	5 Fathom Bank
Bonito, Atlantic	13	8	1945	Frank Lykes, Jr.	Off Sandy Hook
Cobia	90	6	2019	Len Andalis	McCries Shoal
Cod	81	0	1967	Joseph Chesla	Off Brielle
Crab, blue	8¾" pt. to pt.		2008	Raymond Ponik	Bayonne
Croaker, Atlantic	5	8	1981	Frederick Brown	Delaware Bay
*Cunner	3	8.8	2019	John Zema	Atlantic Ocean
Dogfish, smooth	22	0	2020	Ed DiMarcantonio	Strathmere (Beach)
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, red (Ling)	12	13	2010	Billy Watson	Off Manasquan
Hake, white	41	7	1989	Wayne Eble	Off Barnegat Light
Kingfish, Northern	2	8	2004	Chester Urbanski	Barnegat Bay
Mackerel, Atlantic	4	1	1983	Abe Elkin	Manasquan Ridge
Mackerel, king	67	7.2	2023	Dominic Vricella	Manasquan Inlet
*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

Species	Lbs.	Oz.	Year	Angler	Where Caught
Shad, American	7	0	1967	Rodger West	Great Bay
Shad, hickory	2	13	2011	Robert Macejka	Mantoloking
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, hammerhead	365	0	1985	Walter Thackara	Mud Hole
Shark, porbeagle	Vacant (Minimum Weight 100 lbs.)				
Shark, shortfin 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	19	3	2014	William Catino	Longport
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
Swordfish	530	0	1964	Edmund Levitt	Wilmington Canyon
Tautog	25	13	2020	Chris Sullivan	Atlantic Ocean
Tilefish, golden	63	8	2009	Dennis Muhlenforth	Linden Kohl Canyon
Tilefish, blueline (gray)	23	8	2021	George Hanakis	Wilmington Canyon
Triggerfish, gray	6	11	2016	James Massimino	Sea Girt Reef
Tuna, albacore	78	2.4	2022	Matthew Florio	Hudson 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.)				

For information concerning the New Jersey State Record Fish or Skillful Angler programs, visit NJDEP Fish & Wildlife's website at NJFishandWildlife.com.

New Jersey State Record Marine Fish — Spearfishing Category

In 2014, the NJ Record Fish Program expanded with the addition of a Spearfishing category for saltwater. Sixteen species commonly sought after by spearfishers are part of the Program. Spearfishers now have a unique opportunity to be recognized in New Jersey's Record Fish Program. Anglers are reminded that the objective of the Record Fish Program is to increase the awareness of fishing opportunities for species that are regularly sought and routinely found in or off the coast of New Jersey.

New records shown in **red**.

Species	Lbs.	Oz.	Year	Angler	Where Caught
Amberjack, greater	Min. Wt. 60 pounds			VACANT	
Bass, black sea	Min. Wt. 5 pounds			VACANT	
Bluefish	22	2	2017	Igor Kotov	Shark River Reef, USS Algot
Cobia	74	5	2019	Joe Cunningham	Off Sea Isle City
Cod	Min. Wt. 50 pounds			VACANT	
Dolphin	Min. Wt. 40 pounds			VACANT	
*Fluke	15	5	2014	Robert A. Davis	Off Barnegat Lighthouse
Flounder, winter	3 pounds	7	2018	Jim Oriscak	Shark River "back bay"
Hake, red (ling)	Min. Wt. 9 pounds			VACANT	
Pollock	Min. Wt. 30 pounds			VACANT	
Porgy	Min. Wt. 4 pounds			VACANT	
Sheepshead	13 pounds	3 oz.	2022	Dan Street	Atlantic Ocean
Spadefish	Min. Wt. 9 pounds			VACANT	
*Tautog	23	14	2007	Luke Dylan Hickey	Off Cape May
Triggerfish, gray	5	5	2019	Kevin Cavanagh	Off Monmouth Beach
Weakfish	11.8	n/a	2009	Tai Menz	Off Cape May

* Fish was recognized by the International Underwater Spearfishing Association as a world record.

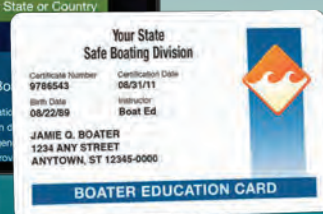


Local divers showing off their catch.

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Eating Fish and Crabs Caught In New Jersey Waters

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.

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, for a complete list of state and federal marine fish consumption advisories visit FishSmartEatSmartNJ.org for making decisions about eating recreationally caught fish and crabs. 



Try the Interactive Map!

One click on the waterbody where you fish takes you to any current health advisories.

FishSmartEatSmartNJ.org



Attention Boaters

Keep Our Water Clean—Use Pumpouts

Ready To Serve Boaters! Visit marina pumpout facilities or contact one of the pumpout boats. A complete listing of operational pumpout facilities at marinas and detailed information on the pumpout boats can be found at NJBoating.org.

Proper maintenance and operation of your on-board toilet and holding tank are critical to ensure they function properly.

- Always use sufficient water when flushing.
- Use toilet paper designed for use in marine/RV systems
- Have your marina inspect your onboard toilet system to make sure it is operating properly



Gills to Grills



Stuffed Blue Crabs

Ingredients

- 12 blue crabs
- 2 cups breadcrumbs
- ½ cup grated parmesan cheese
- Olive oil
- Red pepper, if desired

Instructions

1. Clean the crabs by removing the carapace, abdomen (or apron) and all insides. All that should remain is the body of the crab (meat intact) with legs and claws attached.
2. Make the stuffing by mixing together breadcrumbs and parmesan cheese in a bowl. Gradually add olive oil until mixture is moist.
3. Place clean crabs on a baking sheet and stuff each crab with bread crumb mixture.
4. Sprinkle a small amount of red pepper on each crab.
5. Cook at 350 degrees for 20 minutes or until crabs turn red.

2025 Sedge Island Summer Programs

Sedge Island Natural Resource Education Center is offering a variety of programs in the summer of 2025 for students, adults and families. Come connect with the beauty of Barnegat Bay while learning about salt marsh ecology through fishing, clamming, and discovering what's edible in the bay!

Visit dep.nj.gov/njfw/education/sedge-island-natural-resource-education-center for details, date and cost or contact Karen Byrne at Karen.Byrne@dep.nj.gov.



Conservation Police and Regulation Information



Contact a NJDEP Fish & Wildlife Conservation Police 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**

Become a Wildlife Habitat Supporter!

Did you know that NJDEP Fish & Wildlife manages more than 360,000 acres in 122 wildlife management areas throughout the state?

These spaces protect and conserve fish and wildlife habitat while providing opportunities for outdoor recreation such as fishing, hunting, birding, wildlife viewing, hiking and more! You can help to ensure the conservation of these natural treasures for the enjoyment of generations to come by becoming a Wildlife Habitat Supporter and making a donation. Donations will be used to:

- Manage and restore fish and wildlife habitat.
- Enforce fish and wildlife regulations.
- Restore and protect endangered and nongame species.
- Fund fish and wildlife educational programs and more.
- Improve public access to recreational facilities on WMAs.



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New Jersey Marine Digest

Internet Address	NJFishandWildlife.com
General Email Address	NJFishandWildlife@dep.nj.gov
License Purchasing/System Assistance	NJDFWLicenses@dep.nj.gov
General Information	(609) 292-2965
DEP ACTION LINE—24 HOURS	(877) 927-6337 — (877) WARN-DEP
Marine Conservation Police	(609) 748-2050
Automated Harvest Report System	(855) 448-6865 — (855) I-HUNT-NJ
Commercial Preserves and Semi-Wild Preserves	(609) 984-6213
Exotic & Nongame Captivity Permits	(609) 984-6213 or NJWildlifePermits@dep.nj.gov
Falconry Permits	(908) 735-8793
Field Trial Permits	(609) 259-2132
Freshwater Fisheries	NJFWFish@dep.nj.gov
Lebanon Field Office (North)	
P.O. Box 394, 1255 County Rt. 629, Lebanon, NJ 08833	(908) 236-2118
<i>(Central & Southern Region Fisheries Offices listed under Regional Offices below)</i>	
Horseback Riding Group Permits	(609) 259-2132
Hunter Education	(856) 629-0552 or NJHunterEd@dep.nj.gov
Hunting, Fishing and Duplicate Licenses	(609) 292-2965
Hunting and Trapping Permit Hotline	(609) 292-9192
Operation Game Thief	(855) OGT-TIPS
Outstanding Deer Program	NJDeerClassic@dep.nj.gov
Pheasant and Quail Stocking	(609) 984-0547
Trout Stocking Hotline	(609) 322-9524
Wildlife Conservation Corps	(908) 735-7040
Wildlife Control	(908) 735-8793
Wildlife Education	(908) 637-4125
Wildlife Management Areas	(609) 984-0547
Trenton Office	
Mail Code 501-03, P.O. Box 420, Trenton, NJ 08625-0420	
Endangered and Nongame Species	(609) 292-9400
Land Management	(609) 984-0547
Marine Fisheries	(609) 748-2020
Marine Habitat and Shellfisheries	(609) 748-2040
Wildlife Management	(609) 292-6685
Northern Region Office	
26 Route 173 W., Hampton, NJ 08827 <i>(Serving Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Hunterdon, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, Union, and Warren counties)</i>	
Wildlife Management	(908) 735-7040
Endangered and Nongame Species	(908) 638-4127
Hunter Education	(908) 637-4125 x 123
Wildlife Control	(908) 735-8793
Land Management	(973) 383-0918
Conservation Police	(908) 735-8240
Central Region Office	
1 Eldridge Rd., Robbinsville, NJ 08691 <i>(Serving Burlington, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, and Ocean counties)</i>	
Freshwater Fisheries	(609) 223-6076
Land Management	(609) 259-6969
Wildlife Management	(908) 223-6072
Conservation Police	(609) 259-2120
Southern Region Office	
220 Blue Anchor Rd., Sicklerville, NJ 08081 <i>(Serving Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem counties)</i>	
Freshwater Fisheries	(856) 629-4950
Hunter Education	(856) 629-0552
Land Management	(856) 629-5006
Conservation Police	(856) 629-0555
Wildlife Management	(856) 875-6418
Pequest Natural Resource Education Center	(908) 637-4125
Pequest Trout Hatchery	(908) 637-4173
605 Pequest Rd., Oxford, NJ 07863 <i>For questions concerning state stocking programs or comments call (908) 236-2118</i>	
Nacote Creek Research Station	
P.O. Box 418, 360 Rt. 9 N. (Milepost 51) Port Republic, NJ 08241	
Marine Fisheries	(609) 748-2020 or NJMarineFisheries@dep.nj.gov
Marine Habitat and Shellfisheries	(609) 748-2040
Marine Education	(609) 748-4347
Delaware Bay Office (Marine Habitat and Shellfisheries)	
1672 E. Buckshutem Rd. Millville, NJ 08332	(856) 785-0730
NJ Saltwater Recreational Registry Program	saltwaterregistry@dep.nj.gov

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