

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.

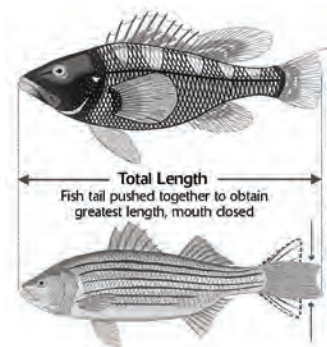
Filleting

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.

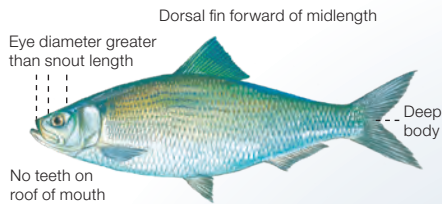
Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact

Beware!

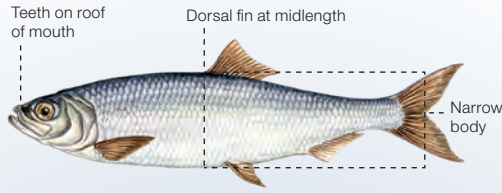
New Jersey participates in the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact, which means that a violator with repeat convictions of New Jersey marine fishing laws may face license suspensions in participating states.



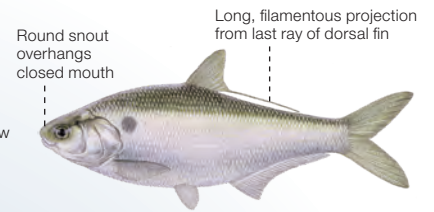
Herring



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



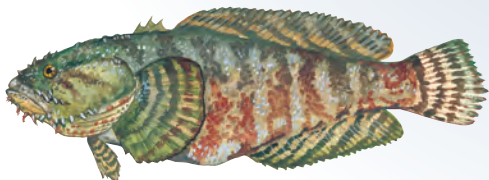
Northern Kingfish



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. 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
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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

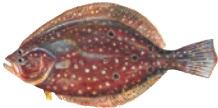



No person may take, attempt to take, or have in possession any striped bass from closed waters. Anglers participating in the Striped Bass Bonus Program may harvest one striped bass per permit at 24" to less than 28" in length from May 15 to December 31. It is illegal to take, attempt to take, catch or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