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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

Notice of Administrative Change

Marine Fisheries

Modification of Atlantic Cod Recreational Season, Size Limit and Possession Limit

N.J.A.C. 7:25-18.1

Effective Date: September 7, 2023

Take notice that, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 7:25-18.1(p), the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection (Commissioner), with the approval of the New Jersey Marine Fisheries Council (Council) at its May 11, 2023, meeting, has modified the recreational season, minimum size limit and possession limit for Atlantic cod. The actions for Atlantic cod have been taken to comply with the New England Fishery Management Council's (NEFMC) management plan, and for the optimal utilization of available Atlantic cod quota.

In July of 2022, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) implemented the recreational fishery measures for Georges Bank Atlantic cod as recommended by the NEFMC (see 87 FR 42375). At their September 2022, meeting, the NEFMC approved sending a letter to New Jersey and other Mid-Atlantic states requesting implementation of complementary management measures regarding minimum size limit, possession limit and seasonal restrictions of Georges Bank Atlantic cod (<https://d23h0vhsm26o6d.cloudfront.net/Final-Motions-Sept.2022.pdf>) ([2023-08179.pdf \(govinfo.gov\)](https://www.govinfo.gov)).

In accordance with the NEFMC actions, the Council approved changes to the recreational Atlantic cod limits consistent with the NEFMC's Northeast Multispecies (Groundfish) Fishery

Management Plan. Previously, the Atlantic cod open season was January 1 through December 31, with no possession limit, and a 21-inch minimum size limit. The Council approved an open season of January 1 through May 31 and September 1 through December 31, with a possession limit of five fish within the size limits of at least 23 inches.

These changes will be reflected in the Fish and Wildlife rules at N.J.A.C. 7:25-18.1(c) and (f). As required at N.J.A.C. 7:25-18.1(p), changes to N.J.A.C. 7:25-18.1 will be published in the New Jersey Register, the New Jersey Fish and Wildlife Marine Digest, and on the New Jersey Fish and Wildlife website.

Full text of the changed rule follows (additions indicated in boldface **thus**, deletions indicated in brackets [thus]):

SUBCHAPTER 18. MARINE FISHERIES

7:25-18.1 Size, season, and possession limits

(a) – (b) (No change.)

(c) A person angling with a hand line or with a rod and line or using a bait net or spearfishing shall not have in his or her possession any species listed below less than the minimum length, nor shall such person take in any one day or possess more than the possession limits as provided below, nor shall such person possess any species listed below during the closed season for that species. Exceptions to this section as may be provided elsewhere in this subchapter shall be subject to the specific provisions of any such section. Fish length shall measure from the tip of the snout to the tip of the tail (total length), except as noted below:

<u>Species</u>	<u>Minimum Size In Inches</u>	<u>Open Season</u>	<u>Possession Limit</u>
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Atlantic Cod	[21]23	Jan. 1--May 31 and Sept. 1--Dec. 31	[No Limit]5
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1. – 6. (No change.)

(d) – (e) (No change.)

(f) Special provisions applicable to a Special Fillet Permit are as follows:

1. – 2. (No change.)

3. The Special Fillet Permit shall be subject to the following conditions:

i. iv. (No change.)

v. No fish of any species less than the minimum size limit specified in (c) above shall be filleted and no fillet of any species listed below shall have the skin removed and no fillet shall be less than the minimum length in inches specified below.

Species	Minimum Fillet or Part Length
Atlantic Cod	[14]15.5 inches

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vi. – x. (No change.)

(g) – (r) (No change.)