Saltwater Recreational Fishing in NSW

Rules and Regulations Summary

AUGUST 2018

Permitted and prohibited methods and activities

It is illegal to:
- sell, barter, exchange or supply for profit any recreational catch
- use a firearm, a chemical or explosive device to take or assist to take fish
- alter a fish (e.g. by filleting, removing the head or tail) until well away from the water. You may clean fish by gilling and gutting only. This rule does not apply at areas normally used for cleaning fish such as boat ramp cleaning tables; if the fish are for immediate consumption or immediate use as bait, or for fish that do not have a legal length. Note: Any fish altered must comply with the listed legal size.
- alter an invertebrate (e.g. by removing the shell, head, tail or meat) until well away from the water. This rule does not apply at areas normally used for cleaning fish such as boat ramp cleaning tables; if the invertebrate is for immediate consumption or immediate use as bait, or for invertebrates that do not have a legal length. Special rules apply to abalone, rocklobster, turban snails and intertidal invertebrates (see general rules section). Note: Any invertebrate altered must comply with the listed legal size.
- use, or be in possession of, a cast net in, on or adjacent to NSW waters.
- retain prohibited fish for any reason, including if they are to be used as bait, they must be returned to the water immediately, even if they are injured or dead.
- tranch fish from one boat to another (except specified bait species).

Line fishing

- You may use 4 rods or lines with up to 3 hooks (or gangs of hooks) each. Each gang is limited to 5 hooks.
- One hand-held jigging line with 6 hook-lures is permitted.
- Drift lines are banned. Lines must be held in the hand or fixed to a boat or the shore.
- It is illegal to jig fish (hooking or attempting to hook fish other than through the mouth).

Nets for catching prawns

The following nets can be used to catch prawns:
- 1 hand-hauled prawn net (max 6 m long, mesh 30–36 mm).
- 1 push or scissors net (lead-line to 2.75 m, mesh 30–36 mm).
- 1 dip or scoop net (mesh 20 mm min, 1.25 m drop max, diameter 0.6 m max).
- Prawn nets must be hand-held and not staked, set, or towed by a boat. They cannot be joined or used with any other net.

Nets and traps for catching crabs and lobster

- Up to 4 hoop or lift nets (mesh 13 mm min, 1–2 hoops per net). Not to be used in ocean waters.
- 1 spanner crab net (max 1.6 m long x 1 m wide). Only for use north of Kororoit Point (Hatt Head).
- 1 lobster trap or pot (max 1.2 m x 1.2 m, buoy 100 mm min).
- 2 crab traps (up to 1.2 m x 1 m x 0.5 m, buoy 100 mm min, mesh 50 mm min, max 4 entrances – none on top).
- All floats/buoys must be labelled with initial and surname, year of birth and postcode of the person who sets, uses or lifts the fishing gear.
- Nets for catching prawns

Drift lines are banned. Lines must be held in the hand or fixed to a boat or the shore.

Bait traps

- 1 bait trap (entrances 60 mm max not exceeding 45 cm long x 35 cm diameter).
- A tag must be attached to a part of the trap which is at or above water level with dimensions not less than 80 mm x 45 mm, labelled with initial and surname, year of birth and postcode of the person who sets, uses or lifts the trap and an abbreviation of the type of gear ‘BT’ = bait trap.
- All letters to be a minimum of 15 mm and in a colour contrasting to the tag.

Diving and spearfishing

If you are diving and spearfishing:
- only use a snorkel when taking fish.
- you may use SCUBA gear for scallops and sea urchins.
- only use bare or gloved hands to take lobsters.

Threatened or protected species

The following species are protected under law. If you catch them, they must be immediately returned to the water causing the least possible harm.

Threatened species
- Black Rockcod
- Great Hammerhead Shark
- Green Sawfish
- White Shark
- Grey nurse Shark
- Scalloped Hammerhead Shark
- Southern Bluefin Tuna**

Protected species
- Ballina Angelfish
- Eastern Blue Devil Fish
- Elegant Wrasse
- Goldspotted Rockcod (Estuary Cod)
- Queensland Groper
- Sandtiger Shark (Herbsts Nurse)
- All Syngnathiformes

** (Limited recreational fishing allowed – see over)

For more information on the sightings of protected fish, visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries or contact (02) 4916 3877.

You can pay the NSW Recreational Fishing Fee:
- at most tackle outlets and also at caravan parks, local shops, service stations and many Kmart stores.
- by phoning 1300 369 365.
- on the NSW DPI FishSmart app.

How much is the fee?
- $7 for 3 days
- $14 for 1 month
- $35 for 1 year
- $85 for 3 years

Charter fishing vessels or fishing guides may hold an exemption certificate that covers you. Always check whether you need to pay the fee before going fishing. By law, all fishing fees are placed into special trusts overseen by angler committees and can only be spent on improving recreational fishing in NSW.

Further information

Some recreational bag and size limits may change during the life of this publication. It is the responsibility of fishers to ensure they are acting within the law at all times. Local fishing rules apply in some areas, such as marine parks, aquatic reserves and Grey Nurse Shark critical habitats.

For more information on rules, local restrictions or fee exemptions visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fisheries. A freshwater waters and regulations summary is available in a similar format. Detailed recreational fishing guides are also available.

This is a summary of laws and regulations at the time of publication. This summary and rules cannot be used as a defence in a court of law.
### Fish – Bag and size limits

**Legal length:** Minimum length of fish unless otherwise stated.

**Bag limit:** The maximum number of fish or invertebrates per person per day. A maximum daily bag limit of 20 applies to any fish or invertebrates not listed.

**Possession limit:** The maximum number of fish a person is allowed to have in their possession at any one time. This includes fish that are also stored elsewhere e.g. in fridge/freezer. For the following species or species groupings; Australian Bass and Estuary Perch, Bream and Tarwhine, Flathead species (except Dusky), Tailor, Luderick, Trevallies and Blue Swimmer Crab, the possession limit is twice the daily bag limit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Minimum Legal Length</th>
<th>Bag limit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Bass and Estuary Perch</td>
<td>Only 1 over 35 cm</td>
<td>2 in total*, 4 in possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Bonito</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Salmon</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Sawtail (Surgeonfish)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Drummer (Bluefish)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0 – Release only, Lord Howe Island Marine Park 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bream and Tarwhine Black, Yellowfin Bream Tarwhine</td>
<td>25 cm 20 cm }</td>
<td>10 in total* 20 in possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogfish Harrisons Southern All other</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0 2 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Red Scorpionfish (Red Rock Cod)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eels Southern Shortfin Longfin</td>
<td>30 cm 58 cm</td>
<td>10 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flathead Dusky (Common) All other</td>
<td>36 cm, only 1 over 70cm 33 cm Bluespotted and Tiger only }</td>
<td>10 in total* 20 in possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flounders and soles Flounder Sole</td>
<td>25 cm }</td>
<td>20 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garfish Eastern Sea</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groper Blue, Red/Brown</td>
<td>30 cm, only 1 over 60 cm</td>
<td>2 by line only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hairtail</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leatherjackets</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>20 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luderick</td>
<td>27 cm</td>
<td>10 20 in possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackerel Spanish Spotted</td>
<td>75 cm 60 cm }</td>
<td>5 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahi Mahi (Dolphinfish)</td>
<td>60 cm, only 1 over 110 cm</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangrove Jack</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marlin Striped, Black or Blue</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1 of each species</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measure fish from point of nose to tip of tail

**Forked tail**

**Rounded tail**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Minimum Legal Length</th>
<th>Bag limit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morwong</td>
<td>30 cm</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grey (Rubberlip)</td>
<td>30 cm</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>30 cm</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banded</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses Snapper (Perch)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullet</td>
<td>Under 15 cm</td>
<td>20 in total* for live bait only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All others</td>
<td>30 cm Sea (Bully) only</td>
<td>20 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulloway</td>
<td>70 cm</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearl Perch</td>
<td>30 cm</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock Blackfish (Black Drummer)</td>
<td>30 cm</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sailfish</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samsonfish and Amberjack</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapper</td>
<td>30 cm</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spearfish</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swordfish</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>30 cm</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teraglin</td>
<td>38 cm</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trevallies</td>
<td>30 cm Silver Trevally only</td>
<td>10 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuna</td>
<td>90 cm or above</td>
<td>2 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albacore</td>
<td>90 cm or above</td>
<td>2 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Bluefin</td>
<td>90 cm or above</td>
<td>2 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellowfin</td>
<td>90 cm or above</td>
<td>2 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiting</td>
<td>27 cm Sand only</td>
<td>20 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellowtail Kingfish</td>
<td>65 cm</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Bag limit comprised of any single species or a combination of listed grouped species.

Baitfish bag limits (excluding charter boat operators)

A bag limit of 100 for each of the following:
- Australian Anchovy
- Maray (Round Herring)
- Southern Herring
- Australian Sardine (Pilchard)
- Blue Sprat (Bluebait)
- Sandy Sprat (Whitebait)
- Garfish (other than Eastern Sea Garfish)
- Jack Mackerel and Yellowtail Scad
- Hardyhead and Silverfish
- Blue Mackerel (Slimy Mackerel)
- Grey Morwong
- Sand Whiting
- Yellowtail Kingfish

A bag limit of 50 for each species or species grouping:
- Blue Mackerel
- Silver Trevally
- School Shark
- Wobbegong
- Spearfish
- Snapper (adult)
- Snapper (juvenile)
- Tailor
- Albacore Tuna
- Big-Eye Tuna
- Black Marlin
- Longtail Tuna
- Southern Bluefin Tuna
- Yellowfin Tuna

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- Spearfish
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- Snapper (juvenile)
- Tailor
- Albacore Tuna
- Big-Eye Tuna
- Black Marlin
- Longtail Tuna
- Southern Bluefin Tuna
- Yellowfin Tuna
### Invertebrates – bag and size limits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fish Species</th>
<th>Minimum Legal Length</th>
<th>Bag limit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abalone</td>
<td>11.7 cm</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balmain Bug</td>
<td>10 cm</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beach Worms</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>20 whole or part in total* 100 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other worm species</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>50 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cockles, Mussels, Pipis</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>20 whole or part in total* 100 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pipis for bait only, do not take beyond 50 m of high-tide mark.</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>20 whole or part in total* 100 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crab</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>10 in possession 5 10 100 in total* 10 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Swimmer</td>
<td>6 cm</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mud (Black/Mangrove) Spanner</td>
<td>8.5 cm</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldier</td>
<td>9.3 cm</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other crabs</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>100 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobster</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2 in total in any combination 2 in total* 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Rock</td>
<td>10.4 cm min. - 18 cm max 11 cm min. 10.5 cm min.</td>
<td>2 in total in any combination 2 in total* 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Rock (male)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2 in total in any combination 2 in total* 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Rock (female)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2 in total in any combination 2 in total* 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropical Rock (Painted, Ornate)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2 in total in any combination 2 in total* 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slipper (flat)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2 in total in any combination 2 in total* 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Octopus</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>10 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oysters</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>50 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney Rock, Pacific, Native</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>10 litres in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prawns</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>10 litres in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saltwater Nippers</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>100 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scallops</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>50 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sea Urchins</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>10 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squid and Cuttlefish</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>20 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turban Snails and other Molluscs</td>
<td>7.5 cm</td>
<td>20 in total* 20 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney, Military</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>20 in total* 20 in total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other molluscs including Turban Snails.</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>20 in total* 20 in total*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Bag limit comprised of any single species or a combination of listed grouped species. A maximum daily bag limit of 20 applies to any invertebrate (excluding molluscs) not listed above.

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### General rules

- Octopus cannot be taken from ocean rock platforms in NSW or rock platforms in Sydney Harbour.
- Lobsters, crabs and bugs carrying eggs must be returned immediately to the water. It is an offence to remove the eggs.
- Abalone, rocklobster and turban snails must not be shucked or mutilated in, on or adjacent to the water.
- Intertidal invertebrates or fish must not be shucked or mutilated in or adjacent to any waters except for immediate use as bait.
- Gathering invertebrates is banned in intertidal protected areas.

Food safety risks exist in shellfish such as oysters and mussels, which are controlled through regular monitoring. Specific programs are in place for commercially harvested shellfish areas, but not for recreational shellfish areas. Hence people should refrain from eating shellfish that they collect. For more information on recreational shellfish collection, refer to the NSW Food Authority’s fact sheet at [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au) or call 1300 552 406.