



NOAA FISHERIES

Sustainable Fisheries

This summary provides a broad overview of restrictions and requirements; the regulations summarized here may be found at 50 CFR part 648. Please contact the Sustainable Fisheries Division at (978) 281-9315 for more information.

Updated September 18, 2014

Bluefish Information Sheet

Bluefish is one of the most popular sport fish along the Atlantic coast. The bluefish fishery operates along the entire Atlantic coast of the United States from Maine to Florida. The fishing year is from January 1 through December 31. Bluefish are managed by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Individual states may also set different recreational and/or commercial restrictions than those in place for Federal waters.

What Federal permits are available for bluefish?

There are two categories of bluefish permits in our region:

- **Commercial Permit** – you must have this permit to sell any amount of bluefish; and
- **Charter/Party Permit** – you must have this permit if carrying passengers for hire.

If you have both commercial and charter/party permits, you may not fish under the terms of both permits at the same time. The operator of any vessel issued one of these permits must possess a valid vessel operator's permit.

To obtain a permit application, contact our Permits Office at: <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/aps/permits/> or (978) 281-9370.

What is the charter/party and recreational possession limit?

Fifteen bluefish per person in Federal waters; however, individual states may set more restrictive possession limits. Check with your state's fisheries agency.

What is the commercial possession limit?

There is no Federal possession limit if you are fishing with a commercial bluefish permit, but there may be a state possession limit for the commercial bluefish fishery. The owner, operator, and crew of a charter/party boat issued a bluefish commercial permit are subject to the recreational possession limit when carrying passengers for hire and when the crew exceeds five individuals for a party boat or three individuals for a charter boat.

How is the commercial quota determined and monitored?

The commercial quota is allocated from the annual catch limit, which is set based upon the estimated size of the bluefish population and sustainable harvest rates. The annual catch limit is split between the recreational and commercial bluefish fisheries. An approved transfer from the recreational harvest limit could increase the commercial quota. Up to 3% of the quota may be set aside for research purposes. The remaining quota is then allocated to the states from Maine to Florida according to percentage shares established in the Atlantic Bluefish Fishery Management Plan. Quota specifications are updated each year.

NMFS monitors the harvest of the states' commercial bluefish quotas. When a state harvests its commercial quota, the bluefish fishery will be closed in that state. Commercial landings in a state are not permitted following a closure announcement.

Weekly landings reports are available at: <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/aps/monitoring/bluefish.html>.

What are the record keeping and reporting requirements?

You need to maintain on board the vessel and submit an accurate Federal vessel trip report (VTR) for all fishing trips. Instructions for completing VTRs can be found at: <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/ro/fso/vtr.htm>. VTRs must be received by NMFS or postmarked within 15 days after the end of the reporting month. Copies of VTRs must

be retained on board the vessel for 1 year after the date of the last entry on the log and otherwise retained for 3 years after the date of the last entry on the log.

If no fishing activity took place during a reporting period, then a VTR must be submitted stating that no fishing trips were taken (referred to as a 'Did Not Fish' (DNF) VTR). DNF VTRs may be submitted electronically up to 3 months in advance on the "Fish-On-Line" website at: <https://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/apps/login/login>.

Any change in the permit information, such as vessel name, vessel owner, address,

etc., must be submitted in writing to the Regional Administrator within 15 days of the change, or the permit is not valid.

All federally permitted seafood dealers are required to report the purchase of bluefish to NMFS via computer, using one of the approved electronic means, unless otherwise directed by the Regional Administrator. For more information on dealer reporting, please call the dealer electronic reporting help desk at (978) 281-9212 or contact your local NMFS Field Office: <http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/sed/portagents/index.html>.