

2017 Marine Fishing Season Dates and Limits • FREE

New Jersey Marine Digest

May 2017



**Size and
Possession
Limits**
page 21



A Summary of Recreational Regulations and
Marine Fish and Shellfish Management Information
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hotlines

New Jersey Fish and 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 per fish or \$300 to \$3,000 fine.

Federal Marine Fisheries Contacts

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NOAA Fisheries Office of Law

Enforcement — Northeast

Enforcement Division HQ
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Federal Fisheries Law

Enforcement Field Offices

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Write to: New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, Large Format Marine Digest, MC501-03, P.O. Box 420, Trenton, NJ 08625-0420



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Director's Message

LARRY HERRIGHTY



The New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife is one of the oldest state wildlife management agencies in the nation, and this year we celebrate our 125th anniversary. The Division traces its beginning to March 8, 1892, with legislation calling for the appointment of three fish and game commissioners and a paid “game protector” for the “better protection of the fishing interests and of the game birds and game animals of this state, and for the better enforcement of the laws relating thereto.”

While the state does not own wildlife, it is the trustee of wildlife for the benefit of our citizens, a concept tracing back to Roman law. The first American federal court case affirming this “public trust doctrine” occurred in 1821 when the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that ownership of water and

underlying lands—and in this case, the oysters it contained—reverted to the citizens upon statehood and independence from England. In 1842, the U.S. Supreme Court found that the public had a common right to fish in navigable and tidal waters of New Jersey because the underlying land was owned by the state for the common use of the people. Today, while the Division leases some areas to shellfishermen for their exclusive use, other areas are open to all anglers.


Migratory species are held in trust by the federal government and the states. A good example of this is summer flounder or fluke. The federal government, in consultation with the states, has the lead role in determining an equitable strategy to protect the fishery while providing equal opportunity for recreational and commercial resource users. This presents a challenge since the size, abundance and availability of summer flounder varies throughout its range. Each state strives for a balance to provide fishing opportunities for their own anglers while collectively recommending regulations that will protect the fish stock.

This year, the NJDEP, led by Commissioner Bob Martin, fought hard for an equitable solution to distributing the summer flounder resource. The DEP has made the case that regulations recommended by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) fail to adequately take into account the size of flounder available to New Jersey anglers and the adverse economic impacts to the charter and party boats, tackle shops, suppliers and marinas that support recreational fishing. Reinforced by data supplied by the Division’s marine fisheries biologists, we believe we can meet the required reductions in recreational harvest and reduce the mortality of throwbacks while still providing our anglers a decent chance of catching some keepers.

Thus we have an 18-inch size limit but a reduced daily bag and season length. These regulations are not perfect, but are better than the 19-inch size limit originally proposed by ASMFC. As we went to press with this Marine Digest, the summer flounder regulations are still being evaluated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, a.k.a. NOAA. Until a final determination is made, the current flounder season regulations, as listed in this publication, stand.

This effort would not have been possible without the support of the New Jersey Marine Fisheries Council and the various fishing organizations representing marine anglers, charter and party boat captains, commercial fishermen and the supporting industry suppliers.

Everyone agrees we need more accurate data to manage our fisheries. It is clear from the participation at public hearings and council meetings that summer flounder are important to marine anglers. It is also critically important, as good stewards of our fisheries resources—and for future generations of anglers—that we take steps to reduce the incidental mortality of the short fish that we throw back. This can be accomplished through education, using tackle such as larger hooks to minimize catching small fish, proper handling of caught fish and safe hook removal. Helpful, up-to-date information can be found on our website at <http://www.NJFishandWildlife.com/fluke.htm> and in the page 6 article on Safely Releasing Summer Flounder Unharmful.

I strongly encourage anglers to continue to work with the Division of Fish and Wildlife in the management of our fisheries resources by staying involved, signing up for the saltwater registry, reducing fish mortality and taking an active role in providing crucial harvest data by participating in the Volunteer Angler Survey (as highlighted in the article on page 12) and by responding when asked to participate in the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey (AP AIS) detailed here http://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/pdf/marine/apais_article2016.pdf from last year’s *Digest*. Above all, enjoy New Jersey’s outstanding marine resources and go fishing! 

Larry Herrighty is the Director of the Division of Fish and Wildlife.



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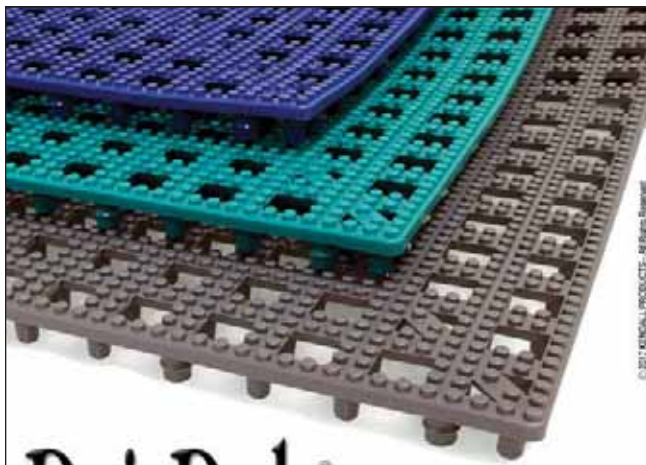
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New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

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.

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