Web Site: MyFWC.com
Visit MyFWC.com/Fishing for up-to-date information on fishing, boating and how to help ensure safe, sustainable fisheries for the future.

Fish and wildlife alert reward program
Report fishing, boating or hunting law violations by calling toll-free 1-888-404-FWCC (3922); on cell phones, dial *FWC or #FWC depending on service carrier; report violations online at MyFWC.com/Law or text: Tip@MyFWC.com

Instant license privileges
Obtain license privileges, 24 hours a day, via License.MyFWC.com or by calling toll-free 1-888-FISHFLORIDA (1-888-347-4356). Processing fees will apply on sales via telephone and Internet. A unique license number allows you to begin fishing immediately after the transaction.

Stop the spread of non-native species
It is illegal to release any non-native fish or any other non-native organism into the waters of the state. To find out more visit MyFWC.com/WildlifeHabitats.

Florida Wildlife magazine – online
Articles and tips for anglers, hunters and other outdoor enthusiasts. Visit FloridaWildlifeMagazine.com to subscribe to the new electronic publication.

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On the cover
Starting October 1, 2012, trophy bass like this 10.5 pounder that are caught and released will be eligible for recognition and rewards provided by the TrophyCatch program (TrophyCatchFlorida.com). Cover photo of Jason Dotson with a 10-pound plus Florida largemouth.
Commissioners’ Message

FWC plans for ensuring Florida is the undisputed bass fishing capital of the world

The seven-member Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is appointed to staggered terms by the Governor and meets five times a year to hear staff reports, consider rule proposals, and conduct other Commission business. At these meetings we encourage public input, as well as listening to scientific and other factual reports provided by FWC staff. Under Florida’s Constitution, we enact rules and regulations regarding the state’s fish and wildlife resources and help ensure staff achieves their mission of managing fish and wildlife resources for their long-term well-being and the benefit of people.

In June of 2011, after more than a year of scientific review and citizen input, we approved the Florida Black Bass Management Plan. The plan recognizes that black bass (Florida largemouth, mouth, shoal, spotted and Suwannee basses) are tremendous natural resources enhancing the quality of life for citizens and tourists. In 2006, anglers enjoyed more than 14 million days fishing for this premier sport fish in Florida. Moreover, they generated approximately $1.25 billion in economic impact for Florida communities and supported approximately 12,000 jobs. (Note: Over all, Florida freshwater fishing accounts for $2.6 billion in economic impact and 24,800 jobs).

Trophy Florida largemouth bass are a huge draw to resident anglers, tourists from around the globe and tournaments, while fisheries with high catch rates of quality bass, and fisheries with relatively rare shoal, spotted and Suwannee basses have an appeal of their own. Properly managing black bass fisheries will provide profound ecological, economic and sociological benefits for Floridians.

Numerous pressures challenge fisheries managers, including human population growth and development, declining water quality and current water management challenges resulting from multiple uses of our waters. In response, action steps identified in the new Black Bass Management Plan were divided into four sections: New Opportunities, Habitat Management, Development, declining water quality and current water management challenges resulting.

You can learn more not only about mandatory freshwater fishing regulations in this publication but also about our management philosophies, funding for conservation (largely through fishing license sales and grants from the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration program), angler recognition programs and fishing tips.

Florida already is the “Fishing Capital of the World.” Now, we look forward to working with stakeholders to document that Florida is the undisputed “Bass Fishing Capital of the World.”

Freshwater Rule Changes

Effective July 1, 2012

• Free freshwater fishing weekend has been divided into two separate free freshwater fishing Saturdays to provide anglers greater opportunities to try recreational fishing or to introduce someone new to this exciting lifetime sport. The new dates will be the first Saturday in April (April 6, 2013) and the second Saturday in June (June 8, 2013). All other rules apply.

• Lake Griffin Fish Management Area, Lake County – A new 10-inch minimum for black crappie has been established. The bag limit for black crappie remains 25 fish.

• Until December 31, 2012 all game fish caught on Lake Medard, Hillsborough County must be immediately released unharmed. Cast nets, bush hooks, and trot lines are prohibited. New rules may be in effect commencing January 1, 2013 – See FLrules.org (Chapter 68) for updates.
This free booklet is your guide to Florida’s freshwater fishing laws and regulations. The Florida Wildlife Code is the final authority on fishing laws (www.FLrules.org). The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) strives to ensure this information is accurate but assumes no liability for errors that may occur. In addition, rules can change between publications. Contact the FWC if you have questions not adequately covered in this booklet; see contact list and map below.

This publication is valid from July 1, 2012, to June 30, 2013.

Florida remains the “Fishing Capital of the World,” due to great resources and responsible management. We consider the quality of life that is associated with recreational activities and living in a healthy environment to be extremely important to Floridians and visitors and are also striving to make Florida the undisputed “Bass Fishing Capital of the World.”

The FWC uses the best scientific management possible to help fulfill its mission of “Managing fish and wildlife resources for their long-term well-being and the benefit of people.”

To fund those efforts, the Legislature sets fishing license fees and exemptions, as well as penalties for violating fish and wildlife conservation laws. State law guarantees money from the sale of fishing licenses goes to the FWC and cannot be diverted.

In 1950, Congressmen Dingell and Johnson, at the request of anglers and the fishing industry, created the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration (SFR) program, wherein fishing tackle was assessed an excise fee and the monies returned to the states for fish restoration projects. The “Wallop-Breaux” amendment in 1984 added import duties on sport fishing equipment, pleasure boats and yachts as well as taxes on motorboat fuels. The result is one of the most successful “user-pays, public-benefits” programs in the world, with taxes from the sale of outdoor recreation supplies enhancing and promoting the resource.

The FWC encourages all anglers to buy a license (License.MyFWC.com). Even if you are legally exempt, you can contribute to the future of our fisheries resources by buying a license and helping the FWC keep your federal tax dollars in Florida to support sportfish restoration.

Recreational fishing often is portrayed in advertising because it is an enjoyable, wholesome experience that reflects a happy and healthy lifestyle. Moreover, it is the No. 1 gateway activity to get youth connected to nature in active outdoor recreation, which can reduce obesity, improve grades and, most of all, add enjoyment to their lives. The FWC is working hard to ensure safe and sustainable recreational fishing for all of our citizens and guests and depends on your license fees to make sure there are fish for tomorrow.
**Fishing license requirements and fees**

License, permit, and issuance fees and exemptions are established by the Legislature. In addition to the cost of licenses and permits specified in this section, license agents currently charge a 50-cent issuance fee for selling licenses or permits.

Licensing requirements follow the species of fish you are fishing for, regardless of where you are fishing. For example, anglers fishing for and possessing largemouth bass in brackish water need a freshwater license; anglers fishing for saltwater species in fresh water (e.g., spotted sea trout, red drum, snook, or American shad) need a saltwater license to possess these species. An exception is that when fishing in fresh water with a freshwater license (or legal exemption) you may take mullet without a saltwater license (seasons and sizes follow the saltwater fishing rules). See Page 8 for fishing license exemptions, but remember, anyone can buy a license to contribute to conservation.

### Resident Freshwater Fishing Licenses

For the purpose of fishing in Florida, a person is a resident if he or she has lived in Florida for six continuous months prior to applying for licenses and claims Florida as his or her primary residence. Active military personnel stationed in Florida, including their spouses and dependent children residing in the household, are considered residents when purchasing fishing licenses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>License Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshwater Fishing</td>
<td>(valid 12 months from specified start date)</td>
<td>$17.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-Year Freshwater Fishing</td>
<td>(valid 5 years from specified start date)</td>
<td>$79.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freshwater/Saltwater Fishing Combo</td>
<td>(valid 12 months from specified start date)</td>
<td>$32.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freshwater Fishing/Hunting Combo</td>
<td>(valid 12 months from specified start date)</td>
<td>$32.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freshwater/Saltwater Fishing/Hunting Combo</td>
<td>(valid 12 months from specified start date)</td>
<td>$48.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident 64 or Older Sportsman's License</td>
<td>includes Freshwater Fishing and Hunting licenses; and Wildlife Management Area, Archery, Muzzleloading Gun, Crossbow, Deer, Turkey, Florida Waterfowl permits</td>
<td>$13.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Freshwater Fishing

- **Freshwater Fishing**
  - Cost: $17.00
- **3-Day Freshwater Fishing**
  - Cost: $17.00
- **7-Day Freshwater Fishing**
  - Cost: $30.00

### Nonresident Freshwater Fishing Licenses

- **Freshwater Fishing**
  - (valid 12 months from specified start date)
  - Cost: $47.00
- **3-Day Freshwater Fishing**
  - (valid 3 consecutive days from specified start date)
  - Cost: $17.00
- **7-Day Freshwater Fishing**
  - (valid 7 consecutive days from specified start date)
  - Cost: $30.00

### Lifetime Licenses (for Florida residents only)

Lifetime licenses are available to Florida residents only. Funds generated from sales of these licenses are invested, creating an endowment to support long-term conservation of Florida’s fish and wildlife resources. Costs of lifetime licenses are less than what would be spent on annual licenses, permits and fees, and are valid in Florida even if you move out of state. Lifetime license holders are also exempt from most recreational license or permits that may be created in the future.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>License Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lifetime Sportsman's License</td>
<td>(includes Hunting, Freshwater Fishing and Saltwater Fishing licenses; Deer, Wildlife Management Area, Archery, Turkey, Muzzleloading Gun, Crossbow, Florida Waterfowl, Snook and Lobster permits)</td>
<td>$401.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years or younger</td>
<td></td>
<td>$401.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-12 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>$701.50</td>
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<td>13 years and older</td>
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<td>$1,001.50</td>
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<td>Lifetime Freshwater Fishing License</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 years or younger</td>
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<td>$126.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-12 years</td>
<td></td>
<td>$226.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 years or older</td>
<td></td>
<td>$301.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tips from the Pros

Spring Bass

TERRY GIBSON, Visit Florida & Fishing Insider; Editorial Director, Fly & Light Tackle Angler Magazine (FishingCapital.com)

In early spring, I shift focus to bass and panfish fishing, mostly in the Everglades. I love to flyfish with popping bugs, and throw surface lures on plug gear. By April, shellcrackers and bluegills are on the bed, and when they’re not you find them along canal banks or the outside of vegetation lines in open lakes. Water levels are typically lower, so fish are concentrated. Best of all, water temps are warm enough throughout the state for bass to blast anything that resembles food. By April and May, especially on cloudy days, water temps remain just cool enough that fish will sometimes feed on top all day long. The morning and evening bites last all summer.

This is a great time to get kids hooked on fishing – maybe the best in terms of sheer action and building a foundation of fishing skills. Our parents started my sister and me out with ultra-light spinning gear, slinging Beetle Spins at shorelines. Once we got that tactic down, they put fly rods in our hands. Mom wanted panfish for fried fish dinners served with collard greens and cheese grits. Yum! But for sport we loved the acrobatic little schoolie bass that gang up in huge numbers this time of the year.

Hardcore trophy bass hunters score this time of the year, especially during the pre- and post-spawn when big sows badly need calories. Eight- through 10-weight flyfishing outfits can handle throwing big poppers and deerhair bugs, and turning big bass from cover. Conventional anglers can cover a lot of water with paddle-tailed plastic buzzbaits. Walking plugs work well, as do frog imitations. During the heat of the day, find deeper structure and switch to Texas- or Carolina-rigged plastic worms. Fish em’ sloooow, and hang on.

Finding Bass

GLEN LAU, Bass Fishing Hall of Fame inductee, cinematographer and author (GlenLau.com)

Without a doubt the toughest thing about catching bass is finding them. I'd say 90 percent of the bass are in one percent of the water. Like a turkey hunter that seeks out where the birds are roosting before the season begins, a good angler should consider putting down his or her rod and reel and take up a notepad or fishing map of the water body. Cruise the shore mapping vegetation, look for structure like downed trees or piers and where water may be flowing in or out of a lake. See where the locals are fishing and talk to them. Check a contour map, or if you have a depth finder cruise the lake looking for sudden changes in depth that may provide refuges or ambush points for bass. If you want to catch the big bass, pay your dues, do the research, and work promising spots slowly and methodically. After 60 years of filming and chasing bass, I’m still fascinated and still learning. If you love the sport as much as I do, you’ll cherish every moment on the water and want to preserve the memories and the opportunities.

Lunker Bass

CAPTAIN SEAN RUSH, Owner/Operator of Trophy Bass Expeditions of Central Florida (FloridaTrophyBass.com)

You’ve probably heard that old saying: Big Bait = Big Fish. Well if your goal is to boat a trophy bass, it’s advice you’d be wise to heed! Think about it like this: What do you think a 250-pound man would rather sit down to at dinner? Half a peanut butter and jelly sandwich or a 16-ounce steak? The answer is, of course, the steak, and that is the way giant female bass approach feeding. They would rather eat one large bait, for example an 8- or 9-inch wild shiner, and be done, than expend a bunch of energy chasing smaller baits.

Going large requires heavy gear. Generally the tackle consists of 7-1/2 to 8-foot flippin’ sticks and stout baitcasting reels spooled with at least 20-pound mono. It also requires patience. Give your fishing holes more time than usual if you feel you’ve found a spot capable of producing a giant. They can take a little longer to entice. They didn’t get big by being easily fooled! This style of fishing can pay off, I mean pay off big!!
Peacock Bass

ALAN ZAREMBA, Owner/Operator of Worldwide Peacock Bass (FloridaPeacocks.com)

Angling enthusiasts travel from all over the world to South America to seek the beautiful and aggressive peacock bass that, thanks to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s foresightedness, we have right here in the canals of south Florida. After extensive research and discussion, peacock bass were stocked in box cut drainage canals of Miami-Dade and Broward counties in the early 1980’s, to help control smaller, less desirable non-native fishes and convert them into a sport fish that anglers can enjoy.

Myself and many other fishing guides, bait-and-tackle shops and local businesses have prospered as a result. Anglers wishing to fish for these and other exotics may want to seek the advice of a local fishing guide, but here are a few tips to get you started.

Peacock bass are different than most North American sport fish in that they are almost exclusively caught during the day. My favorite lure is a #9 floating Rapala, fished on a medium action rod, and using 6-pound monofilament. Another option is to toss a 3/8ths oz. jig with a curly tail. For jig fishing, I prefer a medium-heavy action rod, and load 15-pound braid, with two feet of 20-pound monofilament leader.

These rigs will not only capture peacocks, which I release, but often entice native bass or other non-native fish to strike. Jaquar guapote and Mayan cichlids, which should be placed on ice and taken home for a meal rather than being released, are now part of Florida’s Big Catch angler recognition program (see Page 22).

Bass Guides

TERRY SEGRAVES, Tournament Pro, Guide and Kissimmee Tourism Spokesperson (VisitKissimmee.com)

So you think “it sure would be nice to go fishing and get away from all my problems for a day.” Or, your children are playing computer games and watching TV too much and you want to get them outdoors and involved in a healthier interest. Even without owning a boat or fishing tackle, you can make it happen—consider hiring a fishing guide. With a guide, you may enjoy the trip more because you will often catch more fish, learn new tricks, have proper equipment, and less stress. It is relatively cheap when you consider all you get.

Before hiring a guide select a destination that interests you or one that complements your Florida vacation or business trip. For example, your family is planning a Disney vacation and you heard the fishing is great in Kissimmee. Start with an internet search. A slew of information will come up about the lakes, fishing trends and guide services. Talk to people about places they have fished and enjoyed, and guides they used.

Here are a few questions to ask your guide: What type of fishing do you specialize in and what will we be doing? How much experience do you have and where? Do you have the proper permits, license and insurance? What equipment will you provide and what should I bring? How many hours will we fish and when do we start and finish? What are typical weather conditions and what clothing should I bring? Will you teach me to become a better fisherperson? Do you practice catch and release? What kind of boat do you have and how many people can it fish comfortably? Do I need a fishing license? Do you have referrals? What does the trip cost and what is included for the price?

Ask these questions face-to-face or by telephone, to learn more about the guide and their personality. A lot of guides use live bait (a great way to catch trophy bass). However, if you want to use artificials, remember it is more work and requires more skill, so make sure the guide specializes in using artificial lures. Remember you will spend 4 to 8 hours with a person you do not know very well. Find the right guide to help create memories that will last a lifetime. – Great Fishing and remember your sunscreen!
Game and nongame freshwater fish

Game Fish: black bass, crappie, bluegill, redear sunfish, warmouth, redbreast sunfish, spotted sunfish, flier, mud sunfish, longear sunfish, shadow bass, peacock bass, white bass, striped bass and sunshine bass.

Nongame Fish: all freshwater fish are defined as non-game fish, except grass carp and fish defined as freshwater game fish. Note: Alligator gar require a scientific collector’s permit to take.

Methods of taking freshwater fish

Game fish may only be taken with pole-and-line or rod-and-reel. There is no limit on the number of rods an angler may use.

Freshwater fish may not be taken by use of any free-floating, unattached device, or by taking of fish or wildlife with firearms, explosives, electricity, spear gun, poison or other chemicals. The taking of fish by underwater swimming or diving is prohibited. It is unlawful to sell, offer for sale or transport out of the state any freshwater game fish unless specifically permitted by the FWC, except that licensed anglers may transport two days’ bag limit of legally harvested game fish.

It is illegal to possess any freshwater fish along with gear that cannot legally be used to take freshwater fish, including gear types listed above and below for taking nongame fish or bait. An exception is game fish may be possessed together with cast nets having a stretched mesh size not greater than 1 inch; minnow dip nets not more than 4 feet in diameter; minnow seines having a stretched mesh size not greater than 1 inch, a length not more than 20 feet and a depth not more than 4 feet; and minnow traps not more than 24 inches in length and 12 inches in diameter, with a funnel entrance not more than 1 inch in spread.

Black bass, striped bass and white bass or their hybrids, peacock bass, or crappie and panfish (for crappie and panfish, only in waters where minimum-length or slot-size limits for these fish apply) may not be filleted, nor their head or tail fin removed, until you are done fishing for the day. *NOTE: State statutes (790.052(3), F.S.) make it lawful for persons to own, possess, and lawfully use firearms and other weapons, ammunition, and supplies for lawful purposes including fishing, camping, or lawful hunting or going to or returning from a fishing, camping, or lawful hunting expedition. Consequently, although firearms may not be used to take fish, they can be in possession of someone with legally taken fish.

Nongame fish may be taken:

- With pole-and-line, or rod-and-reel, and by bush hook, setline or trotline baited with cut bait or other substance; but not including live game fish or any part of any game fish; bush hooks, setlines or trotlines (limited to 25 hooks total) are permitted for taking nongame fish for personal use, but only in those areas where trotlines may be lawfully used in accordance with the Wildlife Code of the State of Florida. Refer to the “Commercial Freshwater Fisheries Rules and Regulations Summary.” Bush hooks, setlines and trotlines must be clearly and legibly marked with the harvestor’s name and address while being used or possessed in or upon the waters of the state.
- At night by bow and arrow, and gigs.
- During daylight hours by manually operated spears, gigs, snatch hooks, crossbow or bow and arrow from a boat or from shore except at the spillways of the Eureka and Rodman dams on the Oklawaha River or on the spillway of the Jim Woodruff Dam on the Apalachicola River or in Dade County canals south of the C-4 and east of the L-31N and L-31W canals inclusively.
- By the use of cast nets in the South and Northeast regions, in Citrus County, and in the Southwest Region, except that possession or use of cast nets in waters adjoining Saddle Creek Fish Management Area, Polk County, confined by Morgan Combee Road, U.S. Highway 92 and Fish Hatchery Road are prohibited.
- Using a bow and light at night. Night bowfishing tournaments do not require a permit in the Northwest Region.
- By netting and impounding at night from Sept. 1 to May 1 in specified waters of Northwest Florida. Nets used to take nongame fish (typically suckers) in these specified waters must be less than 100 feet in length, have a minimum 3-inch stretched mesh and shall be continuously attended to ensure immediate release of any trapped game fish. Contact the Northwest Regional office for details (Page 4).
- For personal use by any person possessing a valid freshwater fishing license by the use of not more than one slab basket or one wire trap, made as specified in Rule 68A-23.003, FAC, and used only in those waters where use of wire traps or slab baskets is permitted for commercial purposes. Refer to the “Commercial Freshwater Fisheries Rules and Regulation Summary.” Passive fishing gear such as slab baskets or wire baskets must be clearly and legibly marked with the harvestor’s name and address while being used or possessed in or upon waters of the state.

Prohibited gear for taking marine species in freshwater

Spearfishing: Use of any hand or mechanically propelled, single or multi-pronged spear or lance, barbed or barbless, to harvest or attempt to harvest any marine species while diving in freshwater is prohibited.

Methods of taking bait

Freshwater shrimp and golden shiners of any size, or other freshwater nongame fish, including catfish, less than 8-inches total length, and address while being used or possessed in or upon waters of the state.
length may be taken for bait by the following methods, unless specifically prohibited:

- Cast nets having a stretched mesh size not greater than 1 inch in fresh waters of the state, unless specifically prohibited.
- Minnow dip nets not more than 4 feet in diameter.
- Minnow seines having a stretched mesh size not greater than 1 inch, a length not more than 20 feet, and a depth not more than 4 feet.
- Minnow traps not more than 24 inches in length and 12 inches in diameter, with a funnel entrance not more than 1 inch in spread.
- Any game fish taken by these methods must be released immediately.
- Taking of bait for the purpose of sale requires a commercial fishing license.

**Use of fish for bait**

- Black bass, peacock bass or any part thereof may not be used as bait.
- Live non-native fishes (including goldfish and carp) may not be used as bait, except for variable platys and fathead minnows.
- Whole pickerel or panfish (e.g., bluegill, redbreast sunfish, spotted sunfish, flier, warmouth) or parts thereof may be used as bait for sportfishing by the angler who caught them. Whole pickerel or bream or parts thereof may not be used as bait for trotlines or bush hooks or any method other than by rod and reel or pole and line.
- Panfish less than 4 inches in total length raised by a licensed aquaculture facility may be purchased and used for bait.

**Release/Movement of fish**

Non-native fishes, except for peacock bass and triploid grass carp, must not be returned to the water nor may they be used as live bait, and should be consumed or disposed of properly.

Northern black bass (*Micropterus salmoides*) has been added to the conditional non-native species list. Possession, importation into Florida, sale or transportation of any live specimens or eggs of this subspecies of black bass is prohibited except by special permit from the FWC. Hybrids of the northern black bass and Florida sub-species (*Micropterus salmoides salmoides x Micropterus salmoides floridanus*) are legal to possess in the Suwannee River and its tributaries and north and west of the Suwannee River.

**Taking and possession of freshwater mussels**

Certain families of freshwater mussels may be collected for personal use. The bag limit for freshwater mussels from these families is 10 per person (or 20 half shells). The possession limit is two days bag limit (see images to right and FAQ, Page 24).

Mussels shall be taken by hand-picking only. Use of brailles, crowfoot bars, or other mechanical methods is prohibited. Freshwater mussels, live or dead, may not be taken for later sale.

**Other clams**

Species of freshwater mussels from other families, such as the Asian clam, have no bag or possession limits.

**Protected Sturgeons**

The species of sturgeon found in Florida – Atlantic (*Acipenser oxyrinchus*), Gulf (*A. o. desotoi*), and shortnose sturgeons (*Acipenser brevirostrum*) – are protected both federally and in the state of Florida. No person shall take, possess or sell any sturgeon or parts thereof, or their nests or eggs, except as allowed by specific federal or state permit or authorization. People who inadvertently catch one must immediately release it alive back to the water.

**It is illegal to possess grass carp or alligator gar without a permit.**

**Triploid grass carp** are used for aquatic vegetation control and may not be stocked or harvested without a permit. They grow to over 40 pounds.

**Alligator gar** are found only in the panhandle rivers and grow to more than 120 pounds. Their gator-like snout is distinct. Due to their limited numbers, harvest is restricted to individuals with a valid scientific collector’s permit.

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Grass carp illustration by Ted Walke; Alligator gar by Duane Raver, Jr.
Special bag and length limits

- **5 Black bass** (largemouth, Suwannee, spotted, and shad bass, individually or in total), only one of which may be 22 inches or longer in total length.
  - In south Florida (see Page 15 for map): only one bass may be 14 inches in total length or longer.
  - South and east of the Suwannee River (see Page 15 for map): black bass less than 14 inches in total length must be released immediately.
  - In the Suwannee River (see Page 15 for map), areas north and west of the Suwannee River, and in any tributary river, creek or stream of the Suwannee River: black bass less than 12 inches in total length must be released immediately.
- **50 Panfish** including bluegill, redear sunfish (shellcracker), flier, longear sunfish, mud sunfish, shadow bass, spotted sunfish (stumpknocker), warmouth and redbreast sunfish, individually or in total.
- **25 Crappie** (speckled perch).
- **20 Striped bass, white bass, and sunshine bass** (individually or in total), of which only 6 may be 24 inches or longer in total length.
  - In the Suwannee River, areas north and west of the Suwannee River, and in any tributary, creek or stream of the Suwannee River: the bag limit for striped bass is 3, each of which must be at least 18 inches in total length (20 fish combined bag limit).
- **2 Butterfly peacock bass**, only one of which may be 17 inches or longer in total length.

**NOTES:** It is illegal to possess grass carp or alligator gar without a permit; these fish must be released immediately (see Page 9). Black bass, striped bass and white bass or their hybrids, peacock bass, or crappie and panfish (for crappie and panfish, only in waters where minimum-length or slot-size limits for these fish apply) may not be filleted, nor their head or tail fin removed, until you are done fishing for the day.

**Special bag and length limits**

See Fish Management Area regulations for bag and length limits for lakes in the Fish Management Area system (pages 16–21).

- **Jim Woodruff Reservoir, Lake Seminole:** 10 black bass, each must be at least 12 inches or greater in total length; 15 striped bass, white bass and sunshine bass (individually or in total), of which no more than two may be 22 inches or longer in total length; 30 crappie (speckled perch), in total; 50 panfish (does not include crappie); 15 pickerel (chain, grass and redfin). Possession limit is 50 fish total, regardless of species.
- **St. Marys River and its tributaries:** 10 black bass, all of which must be at least 12 inches in total length; two striped bass, sunshine bass or white bass, both of which must be at least 22 inches in total length; 30 crappie (speckled perch); 50 total panfish (does not include crappie); 15 pickerel (chain, grass and redfin). Possession limit is 50 fish total, regardless of species.
- **Lake Talquin, Leon and Gadsden counties:** Black bass bag limit is five, only one of which may be 22 inches in total length or longer. Crappie (speckled perch) less than 10 inches in total length must be released immediately. Lake Okeechobee, for purposes of these rules, is defined as any point lakeward of a boundary line delineated by the following points:
  - Intersection of St. Rd. 78 and U.S. 441
  - U.S. 441 SE to St. Rd. 5 (’80)
  - St. Rd. 5 (’80) to St. Rd. 25 (U.S. 27)
  - St. Rd. 25 (U.S. 27) to St. Rd. 78
  - St. Rd. 78 to U.S. 441
- **Lake Jackson, Leon County:** Black bass bag limit is five, only one of which may be 22 inches in total length or longer. Black bass less than 18 inches in total length and crappie less than 10 inches in total length must be released immediately.
- **Lake Kerr, including Little Lake Kerr:** Black bass caught from 15 to 24 inches in total length must be released immediately. Black bass bag limit is three, of which only one may be 24 inches or longer in total length.
- **Wildcat Lake, Marion County (Ocala National Forest):** Black bass must be released immediately.
- **Edward Medard Reservoir, Hillsborough County:** Until December 31, 2012 all game fish caught must be immediately released unharmed. Cast nets, bush hooks, and trot lines are prohibited. New rules may be in effect commencing January 1, 2013 – See FLrules.org (Chapter 68) for updates.
- **St. Johns River Water Management Area (Farm 13, including the Stick Marsh), Indian River and Brevard counties:** Black bass must be released immediately.
- **S.N. Knight Tract, Indian River County (locally known as Kenansville Lake):** Black bass must be released immediately.
- **Lake Weohyakapka (Walk-in-Water), Polk County:** Black bass from 15 to 24 inches in total length must be released immediately. Black bass bag limit is three, only one of which may be 24 inches in total length or longer.
- **Lake Okeechobee:** Black bass less than 18 inches in total length must be released immediately. Black bass bag limit is five, only one of which may be 22 inches in total length or longer. Crappie (speckled perch) less than 10 inches in total length must be released immediately. Lake Okeechobee, for purposes of these rules, is defined as any point lakeward of a boundary line delineated by the following points:
  - Intersection of St. Rd. 78 and U.S. 441
  - U.S. 441 SE to St. Rd. 5 (’80)
  - St. Rd. 5 (’80) to St. Rd. 25 (U.S. 27)
  - St. Rd. 25 (U.S. 27) to St. Rd. 78
  - St. Rd. 78 to U.S. 441
  - Harney Pond Canal (C-41) north of St. Rd. 78 to South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) structure S-71.
  - C-41-A Canal, southeast of the SFWMD S-84 structure.
  - Indian Prairie Canal (C-40) north of St. Rd. 78 to SFWMD structure S-72.
  - All of Taylor Creek and Nubbin Slough in Okeechobee County.
  - C-38/Kissimmee River south of SFWMD structure S-65E to St. Rd. 78.
- **Lake Trafford (Collier County):** Black bass less than 18 inches in total length must be released immediately. Black bass bag limit is five, only one of which may be 22 inches in total length or longer.

**How to Measure Your Catch**

Total Length is the straight line distance from the most forward point of the head with the mouth closed to the farthest tip of the tail with the tail squeezed or compressed.
Florida freshwater fishes are divided into game fish that have specific bag and length limits and may only be taken with pole-and-line or rod-and-reel, and nongame fish, which are all others. A license is required to take nongame fish, but additional gear types are allowed (see Page 8). Non-native fish are those that do not occur in Florida naturally; most should be harvested and never released. Exceptions are peacock bass, which is a game fish, and triploid grass carp, which are stocked for vegetation control (see Page 9). Where applicable, state record (SR) weights and the Big Catch (BC) qualifying length for adults (see Page 22) are provided.

For details on state records and angler recognition programs visit: MyFWC.com/BigCatch
NONNATIVE-NONGAME FISH

Flathead catfish:
SR 55.05 lbs; BC 36"

Blue catfish:
SR 64.50 lbs; BC 36"

Jaguar guapote:
SR Open 2.5 lbs; BC 13"

Mayan cichlid:
SR Open 2.5 lbs; BC 11"

Oscar:
SR 2.34 lbs; BC 11"

Yellow perch:
SR 1.25 lbs; BC 12"

Common carp:
SR 40.56 lbs; BC 30"

Blue tilapia:
SR 9.38 lbs; BC 18"

FLORIDA FRESHWATER FISH

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FLORIDA 4 FWC
GO FISHING

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Ask any passionate angler, hunter or outdoors person what he or she loves about nature and getting outdoors, and you’ll get an answer based on personal experiences. However, certain key points almost always come up, including spending quality time with friends and family, being physically active while relaxing and getting away from stress, and a love of connecting with nature.

If you inquire about what conservation agencies should do to help people enjoy their experiences, you’ll hear similar themes such as protect the habitat, provide public access and help create the next generation that cares. You’ll also hear concerns expressed about other people and especially the younger generation not understanding the importance of fish and wildlife conservation and the joy and benefits of participating in outdoor recreational opportunities.

Each state has an agency dedicated to fish and wildlife conservation and providing fishing and hunting opportunities to the 88 million Americans 16 years of age or older who fish, hunt or enjoy other wildlife-related recreation (2006 National Survey). In Florida, that is the responsibility of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). Throughout 2011, the FWC made huge inroads to address those concerns through enhanced education, outreach and communications efforts. See Page 19 for an overview of the Get Outdoors Florida! Coalition (www.GetOutdoorsFlorida.org) and Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network (www.FYCCN.org). These youth programs have gotten off to an amazing start but need your support to reach Floridians with key messages about living a happier, healthier and smarter lifestyle by getting outdoors and enjoying active, nature-based recreation.

FWC staff recently joined educators from 37 state fish and wildlife agencies for a North American Conservation Education Strategy Training Academy. Seven years of research and development in the field of conservation education culminated in the training session, which stressed core concepts in education and outreach (including outdoor skills, hunter educa-
tion and aquatic education programs) to provide more valuable and relevant messages to Americans of all ages. The training was funded by a grant from the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) and included:

- Understanding AFWA’s Core Conservation Concepts and encouraging states to adapt their own (see Florida’s below).
- Formulating conservation education benchmarks.
- Implementing a kindergarten through high school process for conservation education.
- Using field investigation activities for inquiry-based learning.
- Integrating outdoor skills-based education into state education standards.
- Using best practices for developing stewardship education.

Learning about the North American Model of Fish and Wildlife Conservation and promoting the 75th anniversary of the Federal Aid in Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Program in 2012 (see Page 21).

The FWC’s core concepts for conservation education have been refined and will be part of a consistent messaging effort in Florida and nationally. These ideas communicate what every citizen should know and understand about fish, wildlife and their conservation management.

**Concept 1:** The FWC is the agency responsible for leading fish and wildlife resource management in Florida. Fish and wildlife belong to us all, and the FWC manages and protects these resources on our behalf.

**Concept 2:** Regulations are sometimes necessary to conserve natural resources and allow for safe and sustainable human use of fish and wildlife. Regulations allow various groups to use or observe fish and wildlife in a fair manner that ensures healthy fish and wildlife populations for current and future generations.

**Concept 3:** The health and well-being of fish, wildlife and humans depend on the quality and diversity of their environment. All living things benefit from a healthy and diverse environment.

**Concept 4:** Fish and wildlife can be sustainably used, conserved and restored through science-informed management, which considers the needs of humans as well as those of fish and wildlife. Fish and wildlife conservation and management are solidly rooted in science and balance the needs of people with consideration for maintaining healthy populations of fish and wildlife, as well as their habitats.

**Concept 5:** Fish and wildlife habitat conservation provides human-health, recreation, aesthetic and economic benefits. Healthy habitats provide humans with products, maintain environmental cycles, enrich our wellbeing and maintain our basic needs.

**Concept 6:** Informed, supportive and active citizens and partners with FWC are vital to sustaining Florida’s fish and wildlife. The future of Florida’s fish and wildlife depends on citizens and partners working together with FWC. Fish and wildlife are shared resources, and sustaining thriving populations depends on us all.

**Concept 7:** Fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing and boating are appropriate uses of Florida’s natural resources, and participation in these activities contributes to fish and wildlife management. Citizens enjoy fish and wildlife recreational activities and have the right to engage in them lawfully. Fish and wildlife recreation can be managed sustainably and can contribute to management through revenue, harvest information and increased public support.

**Concept 8:** To sustain our fish and wildlife resources, participants in fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing and boating must use safe practices, respect the rights and property of others and understand that fish and wildlife are a shared resource. Everyone has the opportunity to participate in fish and wildlife recreation.

**Concept 9:** Knowledge of and support for fish and wildlife funding sources is essential for continued research, management and conservation of these resources.

The FWC uses a variety of funding sources to manage Florida’s fish and wildlife resources for everyone. When Floridians buy licenses and permits, register their vehicles or buy and sell property they help support fish and wildlife conservation.

**Concept 10:** Fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, boating and other nature-based activities provide people with millions of days of outdoor recreation and generate nearly $5 billion for Florida’s economy each year (2011-12 Programs of the FWC). Florida’s year-round fish and wildlife recreational opportunities provide communities with economic benefits and contribute to human quality of life and improved conservation of natural areas.

**Concept 11:** Protecting, restoring and managing habitat is critical to managing and conserving Florida’s fish and wildlife. Habitat management, protection and restoration help sustain and conserve ecosystems and benefit Florida’s fish, wildlife and human populations.

**Concept 12:** Proactive and responsive FWC law enforcement services are necessary to protect Florida’s natural resources and its citizens. Enforcement of conservation and safety laws requires an educated, coordinated and consistent effort.

It is the FWC’s hope that as people attain a greater understanding and respect for these core concepts of fish and wildlife conservation, we will all work together with a greater sense of purpose. Together we will provide outstanding recreational opportunities for current generations and help create the next generation that cares.
Black bass fishing zones

**Northwest** (Blue area. Waters north and west of the Suwannee River, including its tributaries).
Black bass less than 12 inches total length must be released immediately. Black bass bag limit is five, only one of which may be 22 inches in total length or longer.

**Central and Northeast** (White area)
Black bass less than 14 inches total length must be released immediately. Black bass bag limit is five, only one of which may be 22 inches in total length or longer.

**South** (Green area)
In the St. Lucie canal, areas east of US Hwy. 441 and south of S.R. 80, only 1 bass of the five bass daily bag limit may be 14 inches or longer.

Make sure there are fish for tomorrow

Only half of Florida's anglers are required to buy a license, but their license fees are a vital source of funding for fish and wildlife conservation. Seniors, youths and others who are exempt can contribute to fish and wildlife conservation simply by voluntarily buying a fishing license. License fees help with scientific management, habitat restoration, fish stocking, fishing and boating access, law enforcement and outreach programs.

Each license bought also captures more Federal Aid in Sportfish Restoration money and brings tackle and motor boat fuel taxes home to Florida. In addition, when you buy your license, you may now make a voluntary donation to youth fishing and hunting programs in Florida (License.MyFWC.com).

Thank you for supporting our youth!

Good Fishing Depends on Clean Water

Many of our rivers, lakes, and coastal areas are experiencing algae blooms that cover our favorite fishing spots with green slime and cause fish kills and “dead zones” where no aquatic life can survive. The cause is usually nitrogen and phosphorus pollution that comes from farm and lawn fertilizers, septic systems, animal waste, and sewage treatment plants. Everyone can do their part for clean water by reducing fertilizer use, preserving plants along shorelines, and picking up pet waste. Supporting water quality protection supports great fishing! Learn more at: www.epa.gov/nutrientpollution/.
Regulations for Fish Management Areas

1. A fishing license is required for residents from 16 to 64 years of age, and for non-residents 16 or more years of age, to fish by any method, including cane poles, on a Fish Management Area. Refer to Fishing License Fees for exemptions (Pages 5 and 8).

2. The possession of fishing tackle is prohibited on any Fish Management Area that is closed to fishing.

3. Bag limits and methods of taking freshwater fish apply except as provided for a particular Fish Management Area.

4. The possession of nets (other than legal minnow seines, cast nets or dip nets), fish traps, trotlines or setlines is prohibited unless specifically authorized by rules established for a particular Fish Management Area.

5. Persons entering or leaving Fish Management Areas that have designated entry points shall enter or leave only at such designated points.

6. Any vehicle, boat or other transportation device may be searched while in, entering or leaving a Fish Management Area.

7. Fish Management Areas may be temporarily closed to accommodate management projects, or if unsafe conditions exist, as otherwise specified in a specific Fish Management Area rule.

8. Intentional release of wildlife or freshwater fish on Fish Management Areas is prohibited.

Northwest Region

(see map on Page 4 for regions)

Juniper Bay Lake, Walton County: open to fishing.
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6

Lake Piney Z, Leon County: open to fishing.
- Black bass must be released immediately.
- Panfish bag limit: 20
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6
- Swimming, and taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- Watercraft shall be allowed only as authorized by the City of Tallahassee.
- Access is prohibited from sunset until sunrise.
- Use or possession of cast nets or minnow seines is prohibited.
- No motor vehicles on dams, spillways and fishing fingers.

Lake Victor, Holmes County: open to fishing.
- Gasoline motors may not be used on boats.
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6
- No motor vehicles on dams, spillways and fishing fingers.

Merritt’s Mill Pond, Jackson County: open to fishing.
- The taking of fish and wildlife with rifles is prohibited.
- Gigs are prohibited.
- Trotlines may be used.
- Redear sunfish (shellcracker) bag limit: 10
- Redear sunfish less than 10 inches in total length must be released immediately.
- No bag limit for channel catfish.

Hurricane Lake, Okaloosa County: open to fishing.
- Gasoline motors may not be used on boats.
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6
- No motor vehicles on dams, spillways and fishing fingers.

Karick Lake, Okaloosa County: open to fishing.
- Gasoline motors may not be used on boats.
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6
- No motor vehicles on dams, spillways and fishing fingers.

Lake Stone, Escambia County: open to fishing.
- Gasoline motors may not be used on boats.
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6
- No motor vehicles on dams, spillways and fishing fingers.

Bear Lake, Santa Rosa County: open to fishing.
- Gasoline motors may not be used on boats.
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6
- No motor vehicles on dams, spillways and fishing fingers.

Joe Budd Pond, Gadsden County: Closed to fishing, except as authorized by permit for Commission-sanctioned events (see MyFWC.com/fishing for details). Open to fishing during daylight hours on Saturdays and Sundays during July, August and September or as specified by order of the Executive Director.
- No motor vehicles on dams, spillways and fishing fingers.
- Gasoline motors may not be used on boats.
- Panfish bag limit: 20
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6
- Sunshine bass bag limit: 10
- Black bass less than 16 inches in total length must be released immediately.

North Central Region

(see map on page 4 for regions)

St. Augustine Road ponds (North and South), Duval County: open to fishing from 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset.
- Gasoline motors may not be used on boats.

Swimming, taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages, and use of cast nets are prohibited.
- Panfish bag limit: 20
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6
- Black bass less than 16 inches in total length must be released immediately.

Oceanway Pond, Duval County: open to fishing from 30 minutes before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset.
- Gasoline motors may not be used on boats.
- Swimming, taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages, and use of cast nets are prohibited.
- Panfish bag limit: 20
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6
- Black bass less than 16 inches in total length must be released immediately.

Hanna Park ponds, Duval County: open to fishing from 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset.
- Gasoline motors may not be used on boats.
- Swimming, taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages, and use of cast nets are prohibited.
- Panfish bag limit: 20
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6
- Black bass less than 16 inches in total length must be released immediately.

Pope Duval East and West ponds, Duval County: open to fishing from 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset.
- Gasoline motors may not be used on boats.
- Swimming, taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages, and use of cast nets are prohibited.
- Panfish bag limit: 20
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6
- Black bass less than 16 inches in total length must be released immediately.

Bethesda Pond, Duval County: open to fishing from 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset.
- Gasoline motors may not be used on boats.
- Swimming, taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages, and use of cast nets are prohibited.
- Panfish bag limit: 20
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6
- Black bass less than 16 inches in total length must be released immediately.

Huguenot Pond, Duval County: open to fishing from 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset.
- Gasoline motors may not be used on boats.
- Swimming, taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages, and use of cast nets are prohibited.
- Panfish bag limit: 20
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6
- Black bass less than 16 inches in total length must be released immediately.

(Continued on Page 17)
Crystal Springs Park, Duval County: open to fishing from 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset.
- No person between the ages of 16 years and 64 years shall fish unless accompanied by an angler less than 16 years of age; by an angler 65 years of age or older; by a parent or legal guardian; or by a person over 16 years of age who has been certified by the U.S. Veterans Administration, U.S. Social Security Administration, by any branch of the U.S. Armed Services, or by a licensed physician in this State to be totally and permanently disabled and has obtained a permanent license issued pursuant to Section 379.352(5), F.S.; or by an angler with proof of acceptance as a client for developmental services by the Department of Children and Family Services.
- Swimming, taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages, and use of cast nets are prohibited.
- Boats are prohibited.
- Panfish bag limit: 20
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6
- Black bass less than 16 inches in total length must be released immediately.

Camp Blanding area, Clay County: Indefinitely closed by the Army National Guard for security reasons. If the area is reopened to fishing, the following rules are in effect: Magnolia and Lowry Lakes will be open to fishing on days and times determined by Camp Blanding Post Commander. Openings may be changed at discretion of Post Commander to accommodate military training. All anglers will be required to check in and out of area at a manned check station.
- Guns are prohibited for taking of fish or wildlife except during designated hunting seasons for Camp Blanding Wildlife Management Area.
- Boat launching permitted only at designated access areas.
- Camping is prohibited.
- During periods closed to hunting, vehicles may be operated only on roads to designated access areas.
- Use of all-terrain vehicles is prohibited.
- All watercraft shall be operated at idle speed only.
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6

Alligator Lake, Columbia County: open to fishing.
- Fishing is prohibited in Ponderosa Pond except for authorized groups permitted by FWC.
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6

Eagle Lake, Hamilton County: open to fishing from 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset.
- Gasoline motors may not be used on boats.
- Swimming and taking of fish or wildlife with firearms are prohibited.
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6

Ronnie Vanzant Park, Clay County: open to fishing from 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset.
- Boats or any floating vessel apparatus are prohibited.
- No swimming or camping.
- No person 16 years of age or older shall fish unless accompanied by an angler less than 16 years of age.
- Fishing permitted only with hook and line or rod and reel.
- Nets are prohibited, except for dip nets.
- Black bass less than 16 inches in total length must be released immediately.
- Panfish bag limit: 20
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6

Lake Lochloosa, including Tadpole and Lochloosa creeks; Orange Lake, including Orange Lake proper, and waters south and east of CR 346, and west of U.S. Highway 301; and Cross Creek; Alachua and Marion counties: open to fishing.
- Black bass 15 inches or more in total length and less than 24 inches must be released immediately.
- Black bass bag limit: 3; of which only 1 may be over 24 inches.
- No bag limit for channel catfish.
- Trotlines having a gallon-sized plastic float at each end may be used, provided that such lines are sunk to the bottom or to a minimum depth of 4 feet.

Newnans Lake, Alachua County: open to fishing.
- Trotlines having a gallon-sized plastic float at each end may be used, provided that such lines are sunk to the bottom or to a minimum depth of 4 feet.
- No bag limit for channel catfish.

Suwannee Lake, Suwannee County: open to fishing.
- No motor vehicles on dam and fishing finters.
- Taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages is prohibited.
- Access to the area from 30 minutes after sunset until 30 minutes before sunrise for any use other than fishing and launching and loading of boats is prohibited.
- Black bass less than 18 inches in total length must be released immediately.
- Crappie less than 10 inches in total length must be released immediately.
- No bag limit for channel catfish.

Koon Lake, Lafayette County: open to fishing.
- Taking of fish or wildlife with firearms is prohibited.
- No bag limit for channel catfish.

Montgomery Lake, Columbia County: open to fishing.
- Boats are restricted to idle speed – no wake.
- Black bass less than 16 inches in total length must be released immediately.
- Crappie bag limit: 10
- Crappie less than 10 inches in total length must be released immediately.
- Panfish bag limit: 20
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6

Watertown Lake, Columbia County: open to fishing.
- Taking of fish or wildlife with firearms is prohibited.
- Watercraft shall be operated only at idle speed before 10 a.m. and after 4 p.m. daily.
- Black bass less than 16 inches in total length must be released immediately.
- Crappie bag limit: 10
- Crappie less than 10 inches in total length must be released immediately.
- Panfish bag limit: 20
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6

Lake Griffin, Lake County: open to fishing.
- Trotlines are prohibited.
- No bag limit for channel catfish.

Northeast Region (see map on page 4 for regions)

East Lake Tohopekaliga, Osceola County: open to fishing.
- No bag limit for channel catfish.
- Minnow lift nets and trotlines may be used.

Lake Jackson, Osceola County: open to fishing.
- Cast nets, minnow lift nets and minnow seines are prohibited.
- Black bass must be released immediately.
- Crappie less than 12 inches in total length must be released immediately.
- No bag limit for channel catfish.

Lake Marian, Osceola County: open to fishing.
- No bag limit for channel catfish.
- Minnow lift nets, fish traps and trotlines may be used.

Lakes Tohopekaliga (West Lake Tohopekaliga), Cypress, Hatchineha, and Kissimmee, Osceola and Polk counties: open to fishing.
- No bag limit for channel catfish.
- Minnow lift nets, fish traps and trotlines may be used.

Lake Panasoffkee, Sumter County: open to fishing.
- Trotlines may be used.
- No bag limit for channel catfish.

Chain of Lakes, Lake County (Cook, Winona, Palatikaha, Crescent, Louisa, Minnehaha, Hiawatha, Minneola, Wilson, Susan and Cherry): open to fishing.
- Trotlines may be used from sunset until 9 a.m.
- No bag limit for channel catfish.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

17  2012–2013
Trotlines are also prohibited from 9 a.m. until one hour before sunset Monday through Thursday from May 1 through Oct. 31. No trotline may be secured to or fished within 50 yards of a private pier or dock. No bag limit for channel catfish. Black crappie less than 10 inches in total length must be released immediately.

**Pellicer Pond, Flagler County:** open to fishing. Channel catfish bag limit: 6

**Lake Dias, Volusia County:** open to fishing. No bag limit for channel catfish.

**Fox Lake, Brevard County:** open to fishing. No airboats for fishing or frogging. No bag limit for channel catfish.

**South Lake, Brevard County:** open to fishing. No airboats for fishing or frogging. Trotlines may be used. No bag limit for channel catfish.

**Lake Ivanhoe, Orange County:** open to fishing. Swimming, and taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages are prohibited. Panfish bag limit: 20. Channel catfish bag limit: 6. Cast nets are prohibited.

**Lake Santiago in Demetree Park, Orange County:** open to fishing. Swimming, and taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages are prohibited. Boats are prohibited. Panfish bag limit: 20. Channel catfish bag limit: 6. Cast nets are prohibited.

**Hal-Scott Lake, Orange County:** open to fishing. Swimming, and taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages are prohibited. Gasoline motors may not be used on boats. Cast nets are prohibited. Panfish bag limit: 20. Channel catfish bag limit: 6. Black bass must be released immediately.

**Bear Creek Park, Orange County:** open to fishing. Swimming, and taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages are prohibited. Cast nets are prohibited. Panfish bag limit: 20. Channel catfish bag limit: 6.

**Shadow Bay Park, Orange County:** open to fishing. Swimming, and taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages are prohibited. Cast nets are prohibited. Bluegill bag limit: 5. Bluegill less than 12 inches in total length must be released immediately. Channel catfish bag limit: 1. Channel catfish less than 30 inches in total length must be released immediately. Black bass must be released immediately.

**Clear Lake, Orange County:** open to fishing. Swimming, and taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages are prohibited. Cast nets are prohibited. Channel catfish bag limit: 6.

**Lake Lawne, Orange County:** open to fishing. Swimming, and taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages are prohibited. Cast nets are prohibited. Channel catfish bag limit: 6.

**Starke, Orange County:** open to fishing. Cast nets and minnow seines are prohibited. No bag limit for channel catfish.

**Turkey Lake, Orange County:** open to fishing. Swimming, and taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages are prohibited. Panfish bag limit: 20. Channel catfish bag limit: 6. Black bass must be released immediately. Except for sanctioned events, gasoline motors may not be used on boats.

**Lake Underhill, Orange County:** open to fishing. Swimming, and taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages are prohibited. Cast nets are prohibited. Panfish bag limit: 20. Channel catfish bag limit: 6. Black bass must be released immediately.

**Secret Lake, Seminole County:** open to fishing. Swimming, and taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages are prohibited. Personal watercraft are prohibited. Panfish bag limit: 20. Channel catfish bag limit: 6. Black bass must be released immediately.

**Lake Blue Cypress, Indian River County:** open to fishing. Trotlines may be used. No bag limit for channel catfish.

**Southwest Region**

(see map on page 4 for regions)

**Lake Tarpon, Pinellas County:** open to fishing. Trotlines may be used from sunset until 9 a.m. Sunday through Thursday. No bag limit for channel catfish.

**Lake Seminole, Pinellas County:** open to fishing. Trotlines may be used from sunset until 9 a.m. No bag limit for channel catfish.

**Bobby Hicks Park Pond, Hillsborough County:** open to fishing. Cast nets and minnow seines are prohibited. Swimming and taking of fish or wildlife with firearms are prohibited. Gasoline motors may not be used on boats. Black bass must be released immediately. Crappie bag limit: 10.

**Gadsden Park Pond, Hillsborough County:** open to fishing. Cast nets and minnow seines are prohibited. Swimming and taking of fish or wildlife with firearms are prohibited. Gasoline motors may not be used on boats. Black bass must be released immediately. Crappie bag limit: 10. Crappie less than 10 inches in total length must be released immediately. Panfish bag limit: 20. Channel catfish bag limit: 6.

**Lake Thonotosassa, Hillsborough County:** open to fishing. Trotlines may be used from sunset until 9 a.m. Sunday through Thursday. No bag limit for channel catfish.

**Lake Parker, Polk County:** open to fishing. Wire traps may be used for nongame fish. No bag limit for channel catfish.

**Saddle Creek Park, Polk County:** open to fishing. Cast nets are prohibited. Black bass 15 inches or more in total length and less than 24 inches in total length must be released immediately. Black bass bag limit: 3. Channel catfish bag limit: 6.

**Lakes Tohopekaliga (West Lake Tohopekaliga), Cypress, Hatchineha, and Kissimmee, Polk and Osceola counties:** open to fishing. No bag limit for channel catfish. Minnow lift nets, fish traps and trotlines may be used.

**Manatee Lake, Manatee County:** open to fishing. Trotlines may be used from sunset until 9 a.m., Sunday through Thursday. Outboard motors more than 20 h.p. may not be used. No bag limit for channel catfish.

**Webb Lake, Charlotte County:** open to fishing during posted hours. Gasoline motors may not be used on boats. Panfish bag limit: 20. Channel catfish bag limit: 6.

(Continued on Page 19)
The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is “Creating the Next Generation that CaresSM”

The FWC and its partners are creating the next generation that cares about Florida’s great outdoors, fish and wildlife and their habitats, while helping youth lead a happier, healthier and smarter lifestyle.

Over the past decade, children have become increasingly engaged with television, computers and other entertainment media. This lifestyle has resulted in higher rates of obesity, depression and other physical, psychological and emotional problems. A growing body of evidence suggests that all these areas of a child’s life can improve by encouraging them to connect with nature.

The Get Outdoors Florida! Coalition brings many partners together to show how easy it is to offset these trends, by getting kids outdoors. GetOutdoorsFlorida.org lists simple activities and tips and provides a list of partners. The website also lists events and locations from around the state that take advantage of Florida’s prime climate to provide an unending array of opportunities. You can also volunteer or make a cash donation on the site to help further this important cause.

The Florida Youth Conservation Centers Network is taking this effort to a new level by partnering with facilities around the state to provide camps and curricula that allow youth to enjoy and learn about fishing, hunting, shooting, paddling, boating, wildlife viewing and more. The focus for both groups is on safe and sustainable nature-based activities that can be enjoyed for a lifetime, while making that lifetime longer and more enjoyable.

The American Pediatrics Association recommends that “parents become good role models by increasing their own level of physical activity. Parents should also incorporate physical activities that family members of all ages and abilities can do together. They should encourage children to play outside as much as possible.” The National Environmental Education Foundation and federal agencies have begun training health care professionals on the importance of active nature-based recreation. They are even arming them with prescription pads. The recommended prescription — get outdoors and have fun. Fishing in particular is one of the least expensive, simplest and most accessible gateway activities to an active outdoor lifestyle.

Visit MyFWC.com/Youth to learn more about these programs and how you can participate and contribute to Creating the Next Generation that Cares.
FMA REGULATIONS

- Wire traps may be used for nongame fish.
- Trotlines may be used from sunset until 9 a.m.
- No bag limit for channel catfish.
- Boats are restricted to idle speed – no wake.

Freedom Lake Park, Pinellas County: open to fishing.
- Cast nets or minnow seines are prohibited.
- Black bass must be released immediately.
- Panfish bag limit: 20
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6
- Swimming, and taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages are prohibited.

Dover District Park Lake, Hillsborough County: open to fishing.
- Cast nets or minnow seines are prohibited.
- Black bass must be released immediately.
- Panfish bag limit: 20
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6
- Swimming, and taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages are prohibited.

Al Lopez Park Lake, Hillsborough County: open to fishing.
- Cast nets or minnow seines are prohibited.
- Black bass must be released immediately.
- Panfish bag limit: 20
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6
- Swimming, and taking of fish or wildlife with firearms are prohibited.

Largo Central Park Nature Preserve, Pinellas County: open to fishing.
- Cast nets and minnow seines are prohibited.
- Swimming, taking of fish or wildlife with firearms and possession of alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- Gasoline motors may not be used on boats.
- Black bass must be released immediately.
- Crappie daily bag limit: 10
- Crappie less than 10 inches in total length must be released immediately.
- Panfish daily bag limit: 20
- Channel catfish daily bag limit: 6.

Walsingham Park Lake, Pinellas County: open to fishing.
- Cast nets or minnow seines are prohibited.
- Black bass must be released immediately.
- Swimming, and taking of fish or wildlife with firearms or possession of alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- Gasoline motors may not be used on boats.
- Panfish bag limit: 20
- Crappie less than 10 inches in total length must be released immediately.
- Sunshine bass bag limit: 4

Middle Lake, Pasco County: open to fishing.
- No bag limit for channel catfish.
- Black bass 15 inches or more in total length and less than 24 inches must be released immediately.
- Black bass bag limit: 3
- Only 1 black bass may be 24 inches or greater in total length.
- Nongame fish may be taken by cast nets, dip nets, seines, trotlines, set lines, bush hooks and wire traps. Refer to the Florida Commercial Freshwater Fisheries brochure.

Mosaic Fish Management Area (formerly Cargill Fort Meade Mine), Polk and Hardee counties: open to fishing.
- Fishing is allowed only by daily permit issued by the FWC.
- All anglers must check in and out at the Mosaic creel station, the designated entry point, unless otherwise instructed.
- Days and hours of operation and quotas shall be as designated by the FWC and posted at the Mosaic creel station (typically Mosaic is open Friday through Monday). Fishing is permitted in designated lakes only. All other lakes and restricted areas, so posted, are closed to public fishing. Any lake may be temporarily closed to public access for management purposes, or in the event that access to the lake exposes the public to danger, by posting notice at the creel station.

Unless otherwise specified, Mosaic FMA harvest restrictions are:
- Black bass must be released immediately.
- Sunshine bass bag limit: 6
- Crappie bag limit: 10
- Crappie less than 10 inches in total length must be released immediately.
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6
- Fish may not be filleted, nor their heads or tail fins removed, until the angler has checked out at the Mosaic creel station.
- Disposal of fish remains within Mosaic property is prohibited.
- Taking of fish and wildlife with guns is prohibited.
- Motor vehicles may be operated only on designated roads, parking areas and boat ramps.
- Vehicles may not obstruct designated roads, boat ramps, gates or fire lanes.
- Swimming and float tubes are prohibited.
- Rough fish may be removed from designated lakes by cast nets and minnow seines by permission of the landowner.
- Outboard motors more than 10 h.p. may not be used.

Regulations for individual Mosaic FMA lakes are as follows:

Haul Road Pit:
- Black bass 15 inches in total length or longer must be released immediately.
- Black bass bag limit: 2

Long Pond (LP2 West):
- No boats permitted.

Hardee County Park, Hardee County: open to fishing.
- All anglers shall enter at the Park main entrance, the designated entry point, unless otherwise instructed.
- Angling from a boat is allowed by entry pass issued by Hardee County.
- Angling from shore does not require an entry pass unless otherwise posted at the Park main entrance.
- Days and hours of operation and quotas for freshwater fishing are posted at the Park main entrance. Fishing is permitted in designated lakes only. Any lake may be closed to public access by Hardee County for management purposes, or in the event that access to the lake exposes the public to danger, by posting notice at the Park main entrance.
- Black bass must be released immediately.
- Sunshine bass bag limit: 6
- Panfish bag limit: 20
- Crappie bag limit: 10
- Crappie less than 10 inches in total length must be released immediately.
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6
- Fish may not be filleted, nor their head or tail fin removed, until the angler has left the Park. Disposal of fish remains within Hardee County Park is prohibited.
- Taking of fish and wildlife with guns is prohibited.
- Motor vehicles may be operated only on designated roads, parking areas, and boat ramps.
- Vehicles may not obstruct designated roads, parking areas, and boat ramps.
- Swimming and float tubes are prohibited.
- Watercraft are restricted to idle speed – no wake.

South Region

(see map on Page 4 for regions)

Palm Lake, St. Lucie County: open to fishing.
- Gasoline motors may not be used on boats.
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6

Caloosha Park Lake, Palm Beach County: open to fishing.
- Black bass must be released immediately.
- Panfish bag limit: 20
- Channel catfish bag limit: 6

(Continued on Page 21)
Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration
– A legacy of success

How often do you see people or businesses wanting to be taxed and happy about it?

In 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act. This Act has been key to implementing the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation (see MyFWC.com). Since 1941, sport-fishing businesses have paid a federal excise tax that was deposited in the general treasury of the United States but did not directly benefit manufacturers or anglers. In 1950, sportsmen and businesses teamed with conservation-minded policy makers to redirect these existing federal excise taxes to the Restoration Program (aka: SFR, Dingell-Johnson or Wallop-Breaux). As of 2012, Federal Aid and the North American Model will have been working for 75 years.

The concept was to restore sportfish populations and improve public access, so more people can enjoy fishing and so fishing sales would increase. SFR came about as a result of anglers wanting to see more money directed toward restoring the nation’s recreational fisheries, and ensuring better fishing opportunities for themselves and future generations. It has been the best thing for anglers since fishing reels were invented.

Today, SFR uses a small excise tax on fishing reels and other fishing tackle, as well as a motor boat fuel tax, to fund sport fish restoration and boating access programs. It is working. There are now at least 77 percent more anglers than in 1950. Purchases of tax-related items by anglers have increased by nearly 200 percent in dollars (adjusted for the consumer-price index) since 1955.

Anglers and fishing businesses want to know the benefits they receive in return. To help answer this, Andrew Loftus Consulting and Southwick Associates analyzed data on excise taxes invested, fishing participation, and angler purchases of excise-tax related products for a 2011 report to the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. The report found that excise-tax related return-on-investment ranged from 1,585 percent in 1970 to 2,643 percent in 1980.

In Florida alone, SFR provided $12 million in 2011, of which 15 percent ($1.8 million) went to boating access. Freshwater fisheries conservation received $5 million. The rest went to saltwater fisheries. In freshwater, the FWC uses this money to improve fisheries habitat, stock fish, conduct research and manage fish populations. We also conduct aquatic education programs and provide valuable fishing and conservation tips to anglers.
The “Big Catch” Angler Recognition Program rewards anglers who catch a memorable-sized fish. Qualifying anglers receive a colorful citation and a unique South Florida “Exotic Slam” (for catching a largemouth bass, spotted sunfish, or flier in one day), or several challenging “Slam” certificates: “Bass Slam” (for catching a largemouth bass, spotted bass, shad, and warmouth), “Brook Trout” (for catching brook trout of five different species), and a “Specialist” (for catching five different species of fish of the same species). The “Big Catch” program, which will recognize anglers for catching and releasing Florida largemouth bass larger than eight pounds, will be expanded to include Florida trophy largemouth bass catches, and to promote catch-and-release of these exceptional fish. Size tiers will include 8.0-9.9 pound (“Lunker Club”), 10.0-12.9 pound (“Trophy Club”), and greater than 13.0 pound (“Hall of Fame Club”), with correspondingly valuable prizes. See TrophyCatchFlorida.com for more information.
Fish consumption advisories for freshwater anglers

Florida’s freshwater and marine fishes are generally considered safe to eat. Fish is an excellent source of protein and nutrients. The American Heart Association recommends eating fish at least twice a week to help maintain cardiovascular health. However, certain fish can be potentially unhealthy to eat, because they can take up contaminants from the water and from the food they eat.

At low to moderate levels found in most Florida fish, mercury poses little danger, and fish can be consumed safely in reasonable amounts. However, developing fetuses and young children are more sensitive to the harmful effects mercury has on the brain than adults. As a result, women of childbearing age and young children should eat less fish than others to avoid higher health risks.

By choosing a variety of fish low in mercury from different water bodies and not eating only one type, anglers can enjoy health benefits without appreciable risks. Consumption advisories have been issued to help anglers choose fish lower in mercury while limiting consumption of some species of fish from certain waters.

Count all fish meals from all water bodies
Fish eaten from different water bodies count toward the consumption guidelines. For example, a woman of childbearing age should not eat more than six ounces of cooked largemouth bass, combined, from all water bodies per month. Any additional fish meals eaten during the recommended time period should have low or no mercury levels.

Other Department of Health fish consumption advisories

Lake Apopka (Lake and Orange counties): For women of childbearing age and young children black crappie, bluegill, blue tilapia, and largemouth bass can be eaten once a week and all other individuals can eat these species twice a week. Brown bullhead catfish can be eaten once a month by women of childbearing age and young children, while the recommendation for everyone else is one meal a week for brown bullhead due to pesticide contamination.

Lake Munson (Leon County): Largemouth bass 19 inches or more should not be eaten more than one time per month due to PCBs.

Mercury questions and answers

Where does mercury come from?
Mercury is released into the environment from natural deposits in rocks, volcanoes and soils. It is also released into the environment when power plants burn coal, incinerators burn mercury-containing wastes, and during production of other industrial chemicals. Airborne mercury attaches itself to dust and water particles and enters Florida waters with rain and runoff.

How does mercury get into fish?
Mercury is found in virtually all waters in the state, usually at extremely low concentrations. Naturally occurring bacteria, which decompose dead plant and animal material in lakes and wetlands, convert mercury into a form called methyl mercury. Methyl mercury accumulates primarily from organisms eaten by fish. Fish may contain different levels of contaminants based on their location, size, age, and feeding habits.

Can I trim or cook fish to get rid of mercury?
No. Mercury accumulates in the muscle tissue of fish, the part you eat. Therefore, trimming excess fat and skinning do not reduce the amount of mercury you consume. The only way to reduce mercury consumption is to eat fish from less contaminated water bodies and to select species that are lower in mercury.

How do I choose which fish to eat?
Small, short-lived species such as sunfish (e.g., bluegill, redear sunfish, redbreast sunfish, or spotted sunfish) and brown bullhead are generally lower in mercury. Generally, smaller largemouth bass contain less mercury than larger individuals. To help you select fish to eat, refer to the Safe Eating Guidelines, below, for statewide advice from untested waters. If you don’t see your favorite sport fish or for recommendations for tested waters, please consult the publication “Your Guide to Eating Fish Caught in Florida” available at doh.state.fl.us/floridafishadvice or by calling 850-245-4299.

EPA/FDA advice for women of childbearing age and young children
Women of childbearing age and children are more sensitive to mercury, and should take special precautions. Guidelines have been established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to protect this segment of the population. Please refer to the EPA Fish Advisories Web page for additional information: epa.gov/waterscience/fish/. EPA, along with FDA, recommend that when selecting and eating fish, women and young children reduce their exposure to the harmful effects of mercury by following these recommendations.

1. Do not eat shark, swordfish, king mackerel, or tilefish because they contain high levels of mercury.
2. Eat up to 12 ounces (two average meals) a week of a variety of fish and shellfish that are lower in mercury, such as shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock, and catfish. Albacore (“white”) tuna has more mercury than canned light tuna. So, when choosing your two meals of fish and shellfish, you may eat up to 6 ounces of albacore.
3. Check Florida Safe Eating Guidelines about the safety of fish caught by family and friends in Florida lakes, rivers, and coastal areas. The Florida statewide consumption advisory provides general guidelines for consumption of largemouth bass, bowfin and gar. For other fish from local water bodies that are not listed, consume no more than 6 ounces per week.

For more information
Check the FWC Web site: research.MyFWC.com/Mercury, or doh.state.fl.us/floridafishadvice.

Safe eating guidelines
These Safe Eating Guidelines provide general advice to anglers from all untested water bodies in the state.

For specific guidance for all tested marine and fresh waters, consult the Florida Department of Health publication Your Guide to Eating Fish Caught in Florida (See: doh.state.fl.us/floridafishadvice/ or call 850-245-4299). DOH’s printed advisory and website generally classify fish using moderate or strict guidelines.

MODERATE GUIDELINES generally for smaller, short-lived fishes such as panfish – but see DOH Guide for details.
- Limits for women of childbearing age and young children are: one 6-oz meal per week.
- For everyone else: two 6-oz meals per week.

STRICter GUIDELINES generally for larger, longer-lived fishes – but see DOH Guide for details.
- Limits for women of childbearing age and young children are: one 6-oz meal per month.
- For everyone else: one 6-oz meal per week.
Frequently answered questions

Do I need a freshwater or saltwater fishing license or both? Answer: In general, you need a freshwater license to take freshwater fish and a saltwater license to take saltwater fish, unless one of the exemptions specified on Page 5 applies. If you are fishing in fresh water where no saltwater species live, you need a freshwater license and, likewise, if you are fishing in the ocean or Gulf you need a saltwater license. However, when you get into estuarine areas where salt and fresh water mix and fish of both types can be found, the issue becomes less clear. The interpretation of the rule is:

You need either a freshwater, saltwater or combination license, or appropriate exemption, to take fish (take is legally defined as taking, attempting to take, possessing, molesting, capturing, or killing any fish or their nests or eggs by any means whether or not such actions result in obtaining possession of such fish or their nests or eggs). If you are using species-specific gear, your license should be appropriate (e.g., freshwater or saltwater) to the species you are targeting. Otherwise you need an appropriate type license to keep your catch and must immediately release any species for which you are not licensed. License requirements follow the species of fish, regardless of where they are caught. For example, if you only have a freshwater license and are primarily interested in catching bag or bream (freshwater species) in a river, but happen to catch a red drum (a saltwater species), you must immediately release the red drum. An exception is you may take mullet from fresh water with only a freshwater fishing license, even though they are normally considered a saltwater species.

What regulations apply to frogs? Answer: There are no seasons, bag or size limits for frogs and a recreational license is not needed. To sell frogs or take frogs to sell, a commercial fish dealers license is required. Frogs may be taken in accordance with 68A-26.002, Florida Administrative Code (FAC), including use of gigs – provided gigs are not specifically prohibited in the area.

What regulations apply to freshwater crayfish? Answer: There are no seasons, gear, bag or size limits for freshwater crayfish, and neither a recreational nor commercial license is needed. It is illegal to prohibit Florida’s imperiled crayfish (Panama City, Sims Sink and Black Creek crayfishes) and all cave-inhabiting crayfish.

What regulations apply to freshwater turtles? Answer: Licenses and permits are not required to take a recreational bag limit of turtles in accordance with rules provided below. Turtles may be taken by hook and line, net or hand. Freshwater turtles taken from the wild may not be sold, but freshwater turtles raised on aquaculture facilities or purchased from licensed vendors can be sold. There is a take and transportation limit of one (1) turtle per person unless the individual transporting the turtles has a receipt indicating the purchase date; quantity and species of turtles acquired; and the name and address of supplier. Snapping turtles, cooters and map turtles may not be taken from the wild. Additionally, alligator snapping turtles, Suwannee cooters and Barbours’ map turtles may not be possessed without a Class III No-Cost Personal Pet Permit and then, only if they were possessed prior to July 20, 2009.

The following species have a possession limit of two: loggerhead musk turtles, box turtles, Escambia map turtles and Diamondback terrapins. Turtle eggs may not be possessed without a permit. Red-eared sliders may not be possessed without a conditional species permit.

Taking cooters, Escambia map turtles and snapping turtles from the wild is prohibited because of similarity to Suwannee cooters, Barbours’ map turtles and alligator snapping turtles, respectively. For all other freshwater turtles, take is limited to one turtle per person per day from the wild for noncommercial use. Freshwater turtles only can be taken by hand, dip net, minnow seine or baited hook. Many freshwater turtles may be taken year-round, but softshell turtles may not be taken from the wild from May 1 to July 31. In addition, collecting of freshwater turtle eggs is prohibited. You may transport no more than one turtle at a time, unless you have proof that all turtles were purchased legally, and an importation/temporary possession permit (License.MyFWC.com) from the FWC, or a valid Aquaculture Certificate of Registration from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS: FloridaAquaculture.com).

What regulations apply to clams, mussels and other mollusks? Answer: Mussels may only be taken by “hand-picking.” Use of brailles, crowfoot bars, or other mechanical methods is prohibited.

What regulations apply to harvesting fish for home aquaria? Answer: Rules and regulations for recreational take and possession apply. You cannot be in possession, nor may your aquarium contain more than these limits. Legal methods of collecting and license requirements also apply. You need a freshwater fishing license to take (defined as “taking, attempting to take, pursuing, hunting, molesting, capturing, or killing any freshwater species, or their nests or eggs”). Avoid taking Florida’s endangered species. A list of them can be found at MyFWC.com/WildlifeHabitats.

How do I use total length and girth to estimate bass weight? Answer: When you don’t have a scale, you can use total length and girth to get a rough estimate of a bass’ weight. See the figure on Page 14 for how to measure total length and girth, then use the following formula: Total Length (in inches) squared, times girth (in inches) divided by 1200. For example, a 22” long bass with a girth of 15” would weigh about 6.1 pounds (22 x 22 x 15 / 1200 = 6.1).

What is the penalty for fishing without a license, keeping too many fish or illegal sized fish? Answer: Generally, noncriminal infractions involve license or permit violations or other minor violations such as size limits, motor size issue, or possession. Noncriminal violations result in fines of $25 to $150.

Second-degree misdemeanors are criminal acts and typically involve taking fish it is illegal to take, fishing in areas that are closed, using illegal gear or counting violations (more than the bag limit). Failure to pay a noncriminal penalty (similar to a traffic ticket) within 30 days escalates the charge to a second-degree misdemeanor. Forgery of a license or use of a forged license is a third-degree felony. Florida Statutes outline the range of penalties; for instance a second-degree misdemeanor is punishable by up to 3 years in prison.

What is the economic value of freshwater fishing in Florida? Answer: The 2006 “National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Related Recreation” ranked Florida the number one fishing state. Overall (freshwater and saltwater combined) Florida ranks number one in In-State Anglers (2.8 million vs. #2 Texas with 2.5 million), Days Fishing in State (46.3 million vs. #2 Texas with 41.1 million), Days Fishing by Nonresidents (4.8 million vs. #2 Wisconsin with 3.8 million), and Number of Nonresident Anglers (885 thousand vs. #2 Wisconsin with 381 thousand). Freshwater fishing in Florida provided 1.4 million anglers (resident and nonresident), with 25.4 million days of fishing fun, generated $1.5 billion in retail sales, and an economic impact of $2.6 billion (adjusted to 2011 values). This economic boon sustains almost 25,000 jobs.

Red-eared sliders may be harvested without a permit but not possessed alive without a conditional species permit. Those in possession of a valid Aquaculture Certificate of Registration and restricted species authorization from the FDACS (FloridaAquaculture.com) may culture and sell red-eared sliders, but only to out-of-state recipients or Floridians who have a valid conditional species permit. However, certified turtle farmers that buy red-eared sliders for direct retail sale must have a conditional species permit. The application for a conditional species permit is at License.MyFWC.com. Rules subject to change; see FLrules.org for the latest.

What regulations apply to clams, mussels and other mollusks? Answer: Regulations governing taking and possession of freshwater mussels are covered by 68A-23.015 FAC. In summary, “Taking” live or dead freshwater mussels for the purpose of sale, as well as “selling,” is prohibited. Bag Limit: No person shall take more than 10 freshwater mussels, or 20 half-shells of the families Unionidae and Margaritiferidae per day. Additionally, no person may possess more than two days’ bag limit (20 individual, 40 half-shells) of any mussels of these families. Any deviation requires a permit from the Executive Director, in accordance with 68A-9.002 FAC (see illustrations, Page 9).

■ Freshwater mussels from families other than the two mentioned above, such as Asian clams, may be taken for bait or personal use.

■ No recreational license is needed.

■ Mussels may only be taken by “hand-picking.” Use of brailles, crowfoot bars, or other mechanical methods is prohibited.

What regulations apply to harvesting fish for home aquaria? Answer: Rules and regulations for recreational take and possession apply. You cannot be in possession, nor may your aquarium contain more than these limits. Legal methods of collecting and license requirements also apply. You need a freshwater fishing license to take (defined as “taking, attempting to take, pursuing, hunting, molesting, capturing, or killing any freshwater species, or their nests or eggs”). Avoid taking Florida’s endangered species. A list of them can be found at MyFWC.com/WildlifeHabitats.