

AMENDMENT OF THE SPORTSFISHING REGULATIONS

The Department of Marine Resources wishes to advise the general public that several additional amendments to the Regulations governing sports fishing have been made. These changes came into force on 19th October, 2007. The amendments address regulations 46, 47, 48 and 70 of the Fisheries Regulation (Ch. 244 – Subsidiary Legislation of The Bahamas – 2000) and have the effect of curtailing the amount of marine resources which can legally be harvested by foreign boaters visiting The Islands Of The Bahamas.

Sport Fishing and Tournament Rules and Regulations for The Islands Of The Bahamas:

- a) A person shall fish by the traditional method of angling with a hook or lure attached to a line held in the hand or attached to a pole, rod or reel.
- b) A person, unless otherwise authorized by the respective permit, shall not use a spear, a fish trap, or a net other than a landing net.
- c) Each vessel shall use not more than six (6) rods or reels unless the operator is in possession of a permit authorizing the use of more rods or reels.
- d) Any person or organization wishing to organize or hold a sports fishing tournament in The Islands Of The Bahamas must apply for a permit. Application for a permit can be made by completing Form 17, paying the \$500 fee and attaching to the application, the proposed rules for the tournament/sports fishing event.
- e) Once the tournament/sports fishing event is approved, a permit (Form 18) will be issued outlining the terms and conditions of approval for the event. The required tournament decals for each participant in the tournament/sports fishing event will also be issued at this time. This decal is to be attached to the bottom of the copy of the sports fishing permit provided to each participant.
- f) All foreign vessels engaged in a sports fishing event must be in possession of a valid permit.
- g) Attempting to sell fishery products derived from sports fishing under the terms and conditions of the permit granted is illegal.
- h) Any migratory fishery resource that is caught shall not in total exceed more than eighteen (18) Kingfish, Dolphin, Tuna or Wahoo per vessel. Any resource not intended to be used shall not be injured unnecessarily but be returned to the sea alive.

- i) Each vessel must adhere to the following catch limits: no turtle, a maximum of six (6) conch, ten (10) crawfish and a maximum of twenty (20) or sixty (60) pounds of any demersal fishery resources (groupers, snappers, etc.) per vessel at any time.

- j) Any type of Billfish (such as Marlins, Sailfish or Swordfish, etc) must be returned to the sea unharmed except where landed under the terms of an approved sports fishing event or tournament.

- k) A fishery inspector has the authority by law to enter and inspect any vessel that has engaged in sports fishing.

- l) The limitations specified above also apply to a Bahamian vessel engaged in fishing for purposes other than commercial by persons who are not Bahamians. For the purposes of this regulation, residents will be treated the same as Bahamians.

- m) Foreign vessels engaged in sports fishing in The Islands Of The Bahamas under a permit are able to, on leaving the country, export the amount of fishery products aboard that vessel in accordance with the catch limits outlined above.

For more information, contact:

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON NEW SPORTSFISHING RULES

1. What's new in the Fisheries Regulations in The Bahamas?

There have been important changes to the bag limits or quantities of fish that a Non Bahamian fisherman can have onboard his vessel. These bag limits are no longer expressed in terms of quantity per person, but quantity per vessel.

2. How much fish am I allowed to keep?

The catch limits in the new Regulation are expressed in terms of amounts that may be aboard the vessel at any time. They are not per day limits, or per trip limits. The new bag limits are:

- 18 Pelagic fish (Dolphin, Wahoo, Kingfish or Tuna)
- 10 Lobsters
- 60 lbs or 20 Demersal fish (grouper, snapper, etc)
- 6 Conchs

3. Am I allowed to eat any of the fish I catch?

Yes. You may consume the fish you catch.

4. Can I clean and fillet the fish I keep?

Yes. You may clean and fillet the fish you catch as long as the limits outlined above are adhered to.

5. What should I do if I catch a demersal fish (such as snapper or grouper) more than 20 lbs in weight?

Inspectors are allowed to use their discretion in regards to "just over the limit" fish. You should avoid difficulties by either, practicing catch and release for larger sized fish, or targeting smaller sizes

6. Can I still use a spear for fishing?

The rules regarding use of a spear were not a part of the recent changes to the Fisheries Regulations. Sports fishermen visiting The Bahamas were, and still are, limited to angling by with a hook and line held in the hand or attached to a rod and reel. The Fisheries Regulations still prohibit sports fishermen from the use of a spear, trap or net (other than a landing net), unless such use is specifically authorized. The authorization to use a spear is easy to get.

7. How do I get permission to engage in spear fishing?

A person wishing to use a spear should put this on their application form for the sports fishing permit. Permission may be granted by the officer issuing the permit for the use of a spear with a hand held sling, referred to as a Hawaiian sling in The Bahamas, or a pole spear. When permission is granted for the use of a spear, this must be endorsed in writing on the permit by the issuing officer

8. Where can I go spear fishing?

Spear fishing is not allowed within 1 mile of the coast of New Providence or the southern coast of Grand Bahama Island. It is also prohibited within 200 yards of the coast of any Family Island.

9. Can I use a spear gun?

The use of a spear gun for fishing is not allowed in The Bahamas.

10. How many fishing reels can I have on my boat?

There is no limit to the number of rods you may have onboard the vessel. You are limited to the use of six or less at any given time. The use of more than six rods moves you to another category of sports fishing vessel. The fee for such a permit is \$10,000.00 per year.

11. Can I use an electric reel?

Yes.

12. I own a home in The Bahamas. Do I still need a sports fishing permit?

The regulation has been adjusted whereby permanent residents are treated the same as Bahamians. Therefore if you own a home and have status as a permanent resident in The Bahamas you are not required to have a permit.

13. I intend to fish from the shore or a dock. Do I need a sports fishing permit?

No, because you will not be using a foreign owned vessel.

14. Can I use a cast net to gather bait fish?

The use of a net must be specifically authorized. If you wish to use a cast net to gather bait, you must specify that you want to use this kind of gear on the Sports fishing Permit Application Form. Once approved, the issuing officer will include the use of the cast net when he issues the Sports fishing Permit.

15. I intend to rent a boat when I visit The Bahamas. Do I need a sports fishing permit?

You will only need a sport fishing permit if the boat you rent is not Bahamian owned. Even when fishing from such a boat, a Non-Bahamian or permanent resident must observe the sports fishing catch limits.

16. Can I still gather conchs while in The Bahamas?

Conch is a protected species therefore you are only allowed to gather a maximum of six. You may however still enjoy conch in restaurants or purchase them from Bahamian seafood dealers.

17. How much fish can I take home when I leave The Bahamas?

Any person leaving the Bahamas is allowed to take with him, for non-commercial purposes, a certain quantity of fishery products as a part of his personal baggage. The limits are:

6 Pelagic fish (Dolphin, Wahoo, Kingfish or Tuna)

6 Lobsters

20 lbs of Demersal fish

18. Do I need a sports fishing permit to go after bonefish?

This depends upon whether or not you are using a Non-Bahamian owned vessel. A sports fishing permit is required if you are fishing using a Non-Bahamian owned boat

19. Is there a catch limit for bonefish?

There is no catch limit for bonefish. Catch and release is strongly encouraged.

20. Do I have to use a local fishing guide?

There is no requirement that you use a Bahamian guide. The Department of Marine Resources encourages the use of Bahamian fishing guides as this provides an enhanced fishing experience.

21. Can I sell some of the fish I catch in The Bahamas?

Visitors to The Bahamas are not allowed to sell or trade any fishery products. This constitutes commercial fishing and would be a serious violation of the law.

22. Where can I get up-to-date information about the laws in The Bahamas online.

For additional information, please visit the Official Bahamas Government website at www.bahamas.gov.bs.

PERMITS

Permits are obtained from Customs officials at ports of entry. Fishing gear is restricted to hook and line and you may not fish with more than six rods at a time.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR EXPORTING SEAFOOD FROM THE BAHAMAS AS A PART OF PERSONAL BAGGAGE

The Bahamas Fisheries regulations allow travelers to export a limited amount of marine resources as part of their personal baggage. Listed below are the maximum allowable limits for all travelers traveling both by air and sea.

Seafood Export Limits carried as part of personal baggage:

- Six Dolphin, Wahoo or Kingfish
- Ten (10 lbs.) pounds of Conch* or Crawfish
- Twenty (20 lbs.) pounds of Demersal fish

Allowable Limits for Foreign Vessels with a Sports Fishing Permit

Persons leaving The Bahamas aboard a foreign vessel that was fishing in The Bahamas under a sports fishing permit are limited to the amounts specified in the sports fishing permit.

***Additional Requirements for Conch Exports**

The Convention on the Trade of Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES), which The Bahamas is a party to, has listed the Queen Conch as an endangered species. Therefore, any conch export from The Bahamas requires the issuance of a CITES Export Permit.

Persons traveling with up to ten (10 lbs.) pounds of conch may apply directly to the Department of Agriculture's Permits Section for the CITES Export Permit. This section is located at the Levy Building on East Bay Street. Office hours are 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday to Friday. The fee for the CITES Export Permit is ten (\$10.00) dollars.

Further information on marine resources export limits may be obtained from the Department of Marine Resources, Phone no. (242) 393-1777, or (242) 393-1014, Fax no. (242) 393-0238 or via email at fisheries@bahamas.gov.bs.