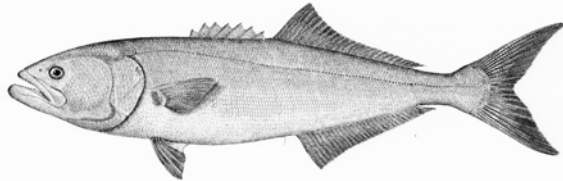




Atlantic Bluefish Summary of Regulations

Last Updated: February 1, 2008



GENERAL INFORMATION

This summary is not a substitute for the regulations; rather it provides a broad overview of restrictions and requirements of NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). You are strongly encouraged to read the regulations in conjunction with this information sheet to fully understand how this fishery is managed.

The Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Bluefish (bluefish) was implemented on March 20, 1990. Bluefish are managed jointly by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). Because of this joint management structure, individual states may set different recreational and/or commercial restrictions than those in place for Federal waters.

FISHING PERMITS

Any vessel, except recreational vessels, that fishes for bluefish in Federal waters (the Exclusive Economic Zone, or EEZ) must have a valid bluefish permit. There are two types of Federal Atlantic bluefish permits, and both are currently open access:

- **Commercial Permits.** Any vessel that fishes for, catches, possesses, transports, lands, sells, or trades bluefish from the EEZ must have a commercial permit. Permits can be obtained by anyone with a valid vessel operator's permit.

- **Charter and Party Permits.** All charter and party vessels must have a bluefish charter/party permit to carry passengers for hire.

Permits can be obtained by anyone with a valid vessel operator's permit. To obtain an application for a permit, contact the Northeast Regional Office Permit Office at: www.nero.noaa.gov/permits/.

SEAFOOD DEALER PERMITS

Any dealer receiving bluefish for purchase from the EEZ must have an annual Federal bluefish dealer permit. Applications may be obtained by using the link in the previous section.

FISHING YEAR

The fishing year for bluefish is: January 1 through December 31.

RECREATIONAL POSSESSION LIMIT (50 CFR 648.164)

The coastwide regulatory possession limit for recreational fishers is 15 bluefish per person. *However, individual states may set more restrictive possession limits.*

The recreational harvest level is set annually as no more than 83 percent of the total allowable landings.

The owner or operator of a fishing vessel issued a commercial bluefish permit, or who is issued a bluefish dealer permit, is not subject to the possession limit. The owner, operator, and crew of a charter or party boat issued a bluefish commercial permit are not subject to the possession limit when not carrying passengers for hire and when the crew does not exceed five individuals for a party boat or three individuals for a charter boat.

COMMERCIAL QUOTA (§ 648.160)

An annual commercial quota is established by NMFS, based on the recommendations of the MAFMC. The quota is allocated to the states from Maine to Florida according to percentage shares established in the FMP. All bluefish landed for sale in a state are applied against the state's commercial quota, regardless of where they are harvested. Up to 3 percent of the quota may be set aside for research purposes. The commercial quota is set annually as 17 percent of the total allowable landings, unless a transfer from the recreational harvest limit is approved.

NMFS monitors the harvest of the states' commercial bluefish quotas. Closure notifications are published in the Federal Register when the Regional Administrator determines that a state will reach its commercial quota. Commercial landings in a state are not permitted following a closure announcement. Weekly landings reports are available at: www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/fso/reports/reports_frame.htm.

RECORDKEEPING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The owner or operator of any vessel issued a Federal Atlantic bluefish permit shall maintain on board the vessel and submit an accurate Federal fishing vessel trip report (VTR) for all fishing trips.

VTRs must be received by NMFS or postmarked within 15 days after the end of the reporting month. VTRs may be submitted electronically if authorized by the Regional Administrator. Instructions for completing the VTR can be found at: www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/fso/vtr.htm.

Copies of VTRs must be retained on board the vessel for 1 year after the date of the last entry on the log. If no fishing activity took place during a fishing month, then a VTR must be submitted stating that no fishing trips were taken. Any change in the permit information, such as vessel name, vessel owner, address, etc., must be submitted in writing to the Regional Administrator within 15 days of the change, or the permit is not valid.

All federally permitted seafood dealers are required to report the purchase of bluefish to NMFS via computer, using one of the approved electronic means, unless otherwise directed by the Regional Administrator. For more information on dealer reporting, please call the dealer electronic reporting help desk at 978-281-9212 or contact your local NMFS Field Office: www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/fso/portoff.pdf.