

Commercial Fishery Possession Limit Adjustment

NOTICE

Effective 0001 hours, Monday, May 1, 2023, the following possession limits will be in effect for Connecticut's commercial fisheries:

Black Sea Bass:

- 600 pounds effective May 1, 2023, for holders of a Black Sea Bass License Endorsement.
- Effective May 1, 2023, from lobster pots when in possession of lobsters: 60 pounds. No Black Sea Bass License Endorsement required. This does not apply to personal use lobster license holders.

Call-in required for black sea bass landings from lobster pots: To provide for timely monitoring of black sea bass landings from lobster pots, the Marine Fisheries Program is continuing the **mandatory weekly call-in reporting requirement for black sea bass landings from lobster pots**. Any commercial fisherman landing black sea bass from lobster pots **is required to contact the Marine Fisheries Program weekly (deadline of 2359 hours on Monday, beginning Monday, May 8, 2023) by calling 860-447-4323** and leaving a message with the following information: the fisherman's name, commercial fishing plate number, the reporting week ending date (reporting weeks run Sunday through Saturday) and total pounds of black sea bass landed from lobster pots during the reporting week.

Additional notes concerning black sea bass landings from lobster pots:

- The weekly call-in reporting requirement is implemented under authority of CGS Sec. 26-157b. Failure to comply with this reporting requirement is punishable as a Class D misdemeanor and may result in commercial fishing license suspension.
- The weekly call-in reporting requirement is not a substitute for other existing reporting requirements. Fishermen must still report their landings in monthly commercial logbooks or via electronic vessel trip reports.
- Weekly call-in reports, as well as timely submission of monthly commercial logbooks, are crucial to maintenance of the opportunity for black sea bass landings from lobster pots. Failure on the part of fishery participants to adhere to the weekly call-in requirement or to submit monthly logbooks in a timely manner will lead to discontinuation of the allowance for seabass landings from lobster pots.
- The department may adjust the possession limit for black sea bass landed from lobster pots or discontinue the allowance for black sea bass landings from lobster pots at any time.
- Only holders of a Connecticut Commercial Lobster Pot Fishing License, a Connecticut Principal Commercial Fishing License, or a Connecticut Restricted Lobster Pot Fishing License may legally fish lobster pots in Connecticut state waters and therefore land black sea bass from lobster pots. As a reminder, lobster pots must be tagged with current fishing year trap tags issued by the Department or New York Department of Environmental Conservation.
- Lobster pots cannot be fished in Connecticut state waters during the fall lobster closure (Sept. 8 – Nov. 28, inclusive). Therefore, no black sea bass may be landed from lobster pots during the fall closure.

Please note the commercial black sea bass fishery is currently closed for the remainder of the Winter I period (through April 30, 2023, inclusive).

Scup:

- 2,500 pounds effective May 1, 2023, for holders of a Scup License Endorsement.
- For Restricted Commercial Fishing License holders: 60 fish.
- From lobster pots when in possession of lobsters: 10 fish. This does not apply to personal use lobster license holders.

The Department recently acquired a generous transfer of 200,000 pounds of 2023 summer period scup commercial quota from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Please note that a 50,000-pound scup commercial possession limit is currently in place through the remainder of the Federal Winter 1 period (through April 30, 2023, inclusive). No scup license endorsement is required during the Federal Winter 1 or Winter 2 periods.

Summer Flounder:

- 1,000 pounds effective May 1, 2023, for holders of a Summer Flounder License Endorsement.

Note: the commercial summer flounder fishery possession limit is 250 lbs for the remainder of the Winter 1 quota period (through April 30, 2023, inclusive).

REMINDERS

American lobster: The minimum carapace length is 3-3/8 inches.

American eel: No possession limit. Minimum length is 9 inches.

Atlantic menhaden:

- The possession limit for commercial harvest of menhaden in CT waters is 12,000 pounds.
- For the landing of menhaden taken commercially from outside of CT waters, the possession limit is 120,000 pounds.
- **Call-in required:** To accurately monitor landings and manage the commercial quota, the Marine Fisheries Program and DEEP Environmental Conservation Police have developed a call-in system. When in possession of 6,000 pounds or more of menhaden and *prior to departure and again prior to landing*, fishermen must notify DEEP Environmental Conservation Police Dispatch by telephone at 860.424-3503.

Bluefish: 1,200-pound possession limit.

Jonah crab: In the commercial fishery, no Jonah crab less than 4.75 inches carapace width may be possessed or sold. Possession of egg bearing Jonah crabs or crabs from which the eggs have been removed is prohibited. Jonah crabs must also be landed whole. Landing claws only is prohibited. Possession of more than two loose claws per body is prohibited. The possession limit in non-trap fisheries is 1,000 crabs. There is no possession limit in the lobster pot fishery. (Connecticut licensing statutes do not allow crabs to be taken by pots other than lobster pots.)

Smooth dogfish: 500-pound possession limit. Commercial fishermen in state waters and in possession of a valid state commercial fishing license can eviscerate and remove the head and all fins of smooth dogfish while at sea provided smooth dogfish make up at least 25 percent, by weight, of total catch on board at the time of landing. Such fishermen may retain other sharks on board provided the fins of other shark species remain naturally attached to the carcass through offloading.

The Department recently acquired a generous transfer of 40,000 pounds of 2023 smooth dogfish commercial quota from the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Spiny dogfish: 7,500-pound possession limit. Spiny dogfish are managed under a regional annual quota. The fishery will close when 100% of the regional quota has been harvested.

Tautog: Closed May 1 through June 30. Will re-open July 1, 2023. Mandatory tagging is required for all commercially landed blackfish.

Weakfish: 100-pound possession limit.

Winter flounder: 50 pounds or 38 fish possession limit beginning April 15, 2023. Federally permitted vessels are permitted to land the higher federal limits of fish taken from federal waters.

All of the possession limits listed above apply to the aggregate of all persons on board the vessel per trip or per day whichever is the longer period of time. Transfer of these species between vessels at sea is prohibited. In any instance where there is a violation of the possession limit on board a vessel carrying more than one person when the catch is commingled, the violation shall be deemed to have been committed by the owner of the vessel, or the operator of the vessel, if the owner is not on board. When any person on a vessel is commercial fishing, the commercial possession limit applies to the entire vessel and no person on that vessel may also possess fish under a recreational creel limit.

For current commercial fishery trip limits and quota status:

Call 860-434-6374 24/7 for a recorded message of current possession limits, or see: www.ct.gov/deep/TL.

The Department monitors landings and adjusts trip limits according to Department regulations in an attempt to provide fishing opportunity throughout the year for all participants in the commercial fishery. In addition, the Department strives to provide advance notification of trip limit changes, although this may not always be possible due to rapidly escalating or unanticipated landings. In such circumstances, only a short notification period may be possible.

The information provided in this notice is a summary of possession limits and other general rules only. For complete information on commercial fishing regulations please see: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/fishing/commercial/marinecircpdf.pdf>, or contact the DEEP Marine Fisheries Program by email at deep.marine.fisheries@ct.gov, by mail at PO Box 719, Old Lyme, CT 06371 or leaving a voicemail at 860.434.6043 between the hours of 8:30 AM and 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday.

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