



COASTAL RESOURCES DIVISION
ONE CONSERVATION WAY · BRUNSWICK, GA 31520 · 912-264-7218

WALTER RABON
COMMISSIONER

DOUG HAYMANS
DIRECTOR

May 4, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members, Board of Natural Resources

FROM: Doug Haymans

SUBJECT: Proposed Amendment to the Rules of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Saltwater Fishing Regulations, Rule 391-2-4-.04

The Coastal Resources Division is proposing to amend a Rule, contained in the Saltwater Fishing Regulations, 391-2-4-.04(3)(m). The proposed amendment would decrease the Red Drum daily creel limit from five (5) fish to three (3) and increase the slot size limit from 14 - 23 inches Total Length (TL) to 15 - 24 inches Total Length (TL).

Included in this packet are the following:

- Public Notice Page A 2
- Background and Synopsis Pages A 3 - 6
- Date, Time and Place of Board Action Page A 6
- Explanation of the Public Participation Plan Page A 7
- Analysis of Small Business Impacts Page A 8
- Strikethrough Copy of Amended Rule Pages A 9 - 14
- Exact Copy of Proposed Rule Pages A 15 - 20

I respectfully submit these items for your consideration. The Coastal Resources Division looks forward to presenting these at the May meeting.

DH/kk

Attachments



COASTAL RESOURCES DIVISION
ONE CONSERVATION WAY · BRUNSWICK, GA 31520 · 912-264-7218

WALTER RABON
COMMISSIONER

DOUG HAYMANS
DIRECTOR

May 20, 2026

NOTICE OF PROPOSED REGULATION CHANGES

TO: All Interested Persons and Parties

FROM: Doug Haymans

SUBJECT: Proposed Amendments to the Saltwater Fishing Regulations, Rule 391-2-4-.04

Notice is hereby given that, pursuant to authority contained in O.C.G.A. §§ 12-2-24, 27-1-4 and 27-4-10, the Board of Natural Resources proposes to amend the Saltwater Fishing Regulations, Subject 391-2-4. The proposed amended Rule, when adopted, will decrease the Red Drum daily creel limit from five (5) fish to three (3) and increase the slot size limit from 14 - 23 inches Total Length (TL) to 15 - 24 inches Total Length (TL).

Written public comments will be received through Tuesday, June 30, 2026. Mailed comments must be postmarked by June 30th, and e-mailed comments will be accepted through close of business (4:30 pm) on June 30th. Comments should be legible, concise, and limited to the proposed rule change.

Following this comment period, the Board of Natural Resources will consider the proposed rules on Tuesday, August 25, 2026, at 9:00 AM in the DNR Boardroom, 2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, SE, Suite 1252 East, Atlanta, GA 30334.

Mail or email comments to: Kathy Knowlton
Coastal Resources Division
One Conservation Way
Brunswick, GA 31520
Email: kathy.knowlton@dnr.ga.gov

Additional information is available at www.coastalgadnr.org.

**BACKGROUND AND SYNOPSIS OF
PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE RULES OF THE
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

**CHAPTER 391-2
COASTAL RESOURCES**

**SUBJECT 391-2-4
SALTWATER FISHING REGULATIONS**

Background

The Red Drum, *Sciaenops ocellatus*, is the state saltwater fish of Georgia and one of the most popular saltwater angling species in the state. Red Drum are long-lived and have a complex life history. They spawn near the mouths of estuaries, and their larvae are transported into the estuaries and creeks where they spend the next 2-3 years before migrating to the nearshore ocean. Adult Red Drum spend most of their adult life in the ocean and return to estuaries to spawn. Red Drum can live to be over 60 years old and grow to more than 90 pounds. Males mature between ages 1-4 and females between 3-6. Red Drum use a variety of habitats and are exposed to a range of threats and fishing pressures throughout their lifetime.

A regional Benchmark Stock Assessment for Red Drum was completed, with the participation of the Coastal Resources Division (CRD) by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) in 2024. Red Drum are currently managed using a biological index known as Spawning Potential Ratio (SPR). It measures the reproductive capacity of a fish population based on the condition of the fished stock versus that of a stock that is unfished. Red Drum are managed with a minimum 30% SPR, and target of 40% SPR, where a higher SPR percentage means more reproductive capacity. The assessment determined that the Southern Stock of Red Drum, consisting of fish in Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida, was below the 30% SPR and were therefore overfished and experiencing overfishing. Overfished means that a fish stock is depleted to a level where its ability to replenish itself has been compromised, while overfishing means that fish are harvested faster than they can reproduce. Often, successive years of overfishing will lead to a population being overfished. Based on the assessment's stock status determination, states must change fishing regulations to end overfishing and eventually allow the stock to return to a status where it is no longer overfished.

The ASFMC's primary purpose is to sustainably manage, and conserve, shared nearshore migratory fish species along the U.S. Atlantic coast. Established in 1942, it provides a deliberative forum for 15 member states to develop interstate fishery management plans (FMP), promoting cooperative management, scientific research, and habitat protection over state-specific regulations. As a member since its inception, Georgia is obligated to adhere to ASFMC's fishery management plans per the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Conservation and Management Act (Pub. L. No. 103-206, 107 Stat. 2424 (1993)).

Reductions in harvest should be viewed in terms of reducing fishing mortality (F) that achieves a given SPR value such that listed F and SPR values reference the same percentage e.g. F40% = 40% SPR, and so forth. Reductions in F are achieved by reducing harvest, or the number of fish kept by anglers. Based on the stock assessment projections, it was estimated that each state in the Southern Stock would need to reduce fishing mortality (harvest and discard mortality) by a minimum of 14.4% for the stock to begin to recover. This estimated reduction would achieve F30% or 30% SPR.

Saltwater fishing has been increasing steadily in Georgia, which may be impacting the availability of fish to anglers. In the last 10 years, the estimated number of angler trips in Georgia state waters (i.e., rivers and sounds) has increased over 40% (as measured by NOAA Fisheries' Marine Recreational Information Program). This increase is statistically significant, and likely to continue.

In December 2025 potential regulation options were presented to the CRD Finfish Advisory Panel, and based on their input, five options exceeding the minimum reduction level required by the FMP were selected for further public input. In February 2026, the options were presented at town hall meetings in Brunswick and Richmond Hill where background information was provided along with a Q/A session to more than 100 attendees. Also, relevant information and the options were presented via CRD's website and opinions were gathered through an online survey open to the public from February 25, 2026, through March 12, 2026. The online survey was completed by 760 participants, 665 identifying themselves as recreational anglers. The survey contained three required questions and is summarized below.

Question One addressed daily creel and slot limits. "Daily Creel" refers to maximum number of fish that can be harvested by one person per day and "slot limit" refers to a minimum and maximum Total Length (TL) in inches that may be harvested. Each of the options presented to the public for consideration would achieve the minimum level of reduction needed. The results in descending order were: 33.5% of respondents preferred four (4) fish with a 16 - 25 inch slot (F40%), while 22.9% preferred two (2) fish and a 15 - 24 inch slot (F40%), 22.5% preferred three (3) fish and a 16 - 25 inch slot (F40%), 15.4% preferred three (3) fish and a 15 - 24 inch slot (F35%) and 5.7% preferred two (2) fish and a 14 - 23 inches (F35%).

Question Two considered vessel limits. Seventy-one percent (71%) of respondents favored limiting the maximum number of fish that can be kept on board a vessel, no matter the number of anglers.

Question Three considered captain and crew retention. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of respondents felt that the captain and crew should not be allowed to keep a creel limit of Red Drum while charter fishing.

Feedback to question one from the meetings, the online survey, and the General Assembly, did not provide an overwhelmingly clear choice, although the general sentiment agreed with a reduced creel limit and larger slot size. CRD therefore recommends the following regulation changes to reduce fishing mortality in compliance with the ASMFC Red Drum FMP:

- 1) Decrease the Red Drum daily creel limit from five (5) fish to three (3): Although the current creel limit is five fish, most anglers on private and charter trips harvest three or fewer Red Drum per trip. Most angler trips would not be significantly impacted by this change; and
- 2) Increase the slot size limit from 14 - 23 inches Total Length (TL) to 15 - 24 inches Total Length (TL): Raising the minimum size of the slot limit by one inch better protects smaller Red Drum that are harvested in higher proportion than other sizes by anglers. Also increasing the upper end of the slot by one inch maintains the current slot width and is expected to partially offset some of the harvest lost from fish at smaller sizes.

Reducing the daily creel limit and adjusting the slot limit will better protect immature Red Drum which are vulnerable to fishing mortality and reduce the risk of localized overfishing. Data suggest that smaller Red Drum are more readily harvested by anglers while larger fish, due to fish behavior and angler preference, may be less apt to be kept. CRD's proposed regulations, reducing to three (3) fish while sliding the slot up one (1) inch reduces harvest by 22.5% and achieves F35%. The proposed regulations are compliant with the ASMFC Red Drum FMP, and this slightly more conservative approach proposed here seeks a compromise between the minimum requirement and varying public opinion. The proposed amended rule also does not seek vessel limits or captain restrictions. These changes would have affected F by minor degrees and were viewed as introducing unnecessary regulations that could be achieved by creel and size changes alone.

Purpose

The purpose of the proposed amended rule is to implement necessary management changes required by the ASMFC Red Drum Fishery Management Plan. This proposed amendment to Subject 391-2-4, Saltwater Fishing Regulations, decreases the Red Drum daily creel limit from five (5) to three (3) fish and adjusts the slot size up one-inch from 14 - 23 inches Total Length (TL) to 15 - 24 inches Total Length (TL), providing a conservative harvest reduction of 22.5%, slightly more than the 14.4% minimum.

Main Features

The primary feature of the proposed amendment is to decrease the Red Drum daily creel limit to three (3) fish and adjust the slot size to 15 - 24 inches Total Length (TL).

Differences

The primary differences between the current Rule 391-2-4-.04 (3)(m) and the proposed amended Rule 391-2-4-.04 (3)(m):

1. Daily Creel and Possession Limit of "Red Drum" reduced from "5" to "3";
2. Minimum Size (inches) increased from "14 TL" to "15 TL"; and
3. Maximum Size (inches) increased from "23 TL to "24 TL"

Date, Time, and Place of Board Action

Board Action: Tuesday, August 25, 2026, at 9:00 AM in the DNR Boardroom, 2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, SE, Suite 1252 East, Atlanta, GA 30334.

Targeted Public Participation Plan
Amendments to Saltwater Fishing Regulations, Rule 391-2-4-.04

Subject 391-2-4-.04, Saltwater Finfishing. A targeted participation plan was chosen as the universe of affected persons is coast wide.

- September 24, 2025 - ASMFC GA Public Hearing on Red Drum Draft Addendum II.
- October 30, 2025 - ASMFC's Sciaenids Board approved Addendum II.
- December 3, 2025, through February 6, 2026 - CRD discussed preliminary options with the Finfish Advisory Panel.
- February 25 and 26, 2026 - Public Town Hall meetings conducted in Brunswick (including virtual option) and Richmond Hill, respectively.
- February 25 through March 12 - Public Opinion Survey open for public input.
- May 18, 2026 - CRD presents proposed amended Rule 391-2-4-.04 to the Board of Natural Resources, Coastal Committee.
- May 20, 2026 - Public Notice of the Proposed Rule is advertised through various print media, GovDelivery and on the CRD website. Additionally, the notice will be mailed to all persons who have requested in writing that they be placed on a mailing list which shall be maintained by the agency for advance notice of its rule-making proceedings and who have tendered the actual cost of such mailing as from time to time estimated by the agency.
- June 30, 2026 - Public comment period closes.
- August 25, 2026 - Consideration of public comment and final action on proposed amended rule.
- Assuming affirmative vote, amended rule filed with the Secretary of State such that the rule becomes effective on January 1, 2027.



COASTAL RESOURCES DIVISION
ONE CONSERVATION WAY · BRUNSWICK, GA 31520 · 912-264-7218

WALTER RABON
COMMISSIONER

DOUG HAYMANS
DIRECTOR

May 4, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Natural Resources

FROM: Doug Haymans

SUBJECT: Economic Impact of Proposed Amended Rule on Small Businesses:
Subject 391-2-4, Saltwater Fishing Regulations

The Administrative Procedure Act requires that during the formation and adoption of any rules, attempts should be made to reduce the economic impact of those rules on small businesses. This applies to businesses that are independently owned and operated, are not dominant in the field and employ 100 employees or less.

The proposal to decrease the Red Drum daily creel limit to three (3) fish and change the slot size limit to 15 - 24 inches Total Length (TL) should have minimal impact on small businesses. If anything, the net long-term consequence should be positive for the sportfishing industry and charter guides.

DH/kk

**STRIKETHROUGH VERSION
ADDITIONS ARE UNDERLINED AND DELETIONS ARE
~~STRIKETHROUGH~~**

**RULES
OF
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

**CHAPTER 391-2
COASTAL RESOURCES**

**SUBJECT 391-2-4
SALTWATER FISHING REGULATIONS**

391-2-4-.04 Saltwater Finfishing

(1) **Purpose.** The purpose of these Rules is to implement the authority of the Board of Natural Resources to promulgate rules and regulations based on sound principles of wildlife research and management, establishing the seasons, methods of fishing, and disposition; size, possession, and creel limits; and gear and landing specifications for certain finfish.

(2) **Definitions.**

(a) "Billfish" means Blue Marlin (*Makaira nigricans*), White Marlin (*Tetrapturus albidus*) and Sailfish (*Istiophorus albicans*).

(b) "Daily creel limit" means the lawful amount of a species of finfish that a person may take in one day or possess at any one-time, except at one's place of abode or at a commercial storage facility provided the Board has not prohibited sale of that species.

(c) "Hammerhead Sharks" means a group of sharks inclusive of Great Hammerhead (*Sphyrna mokarran*), Scalloped Hammerhead (*Sphyrna lewini*) and Smooth Hammerhead (*Sphyrna zygaena*).

(d) "Handline" means a mainline to which no more than two hooks are attached and which is retrieved by hand without the aid of mechanical devices.

(e) "Landed" means to bring fish to shore in this state, regardless of the jurisdiction from which they were taken or harvested.

(f) "Minimum size" means the species' specific size in length, specified as fork length, lower jaw fork length or total length, below which size it is unlawful to possess that finfish species.

(g) "Maximum size" means the species' specific size in length, specified as fork length, lower jaw fork length or total length, above which size it is unlawful to possess that finfish species.

(h) "Open Season" means that specified period of time during which one may take from any of the waters of this state certain finfish species.

(i) "Prohibited Sharks" means a group of sharks inclusive of sand tiger (*Carchariastaurus*), sandbar shark (*Carcharhinus plumbeus*), silky shark (*Carcharhinus falciformis*), bigeye sandtiger (*Odontaspis noronhai*), whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*), basking shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*), white shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*), dusky shark (*Carcharhinus obscurus*), bignose shark (*Carcharhinus altimus*), Galapagos shark (*Carcharhinus galapagensis*), night shark (*Carcharhinus signatus*), reef shark (*Carcharhinus perezii*), narrowtooth shark (*Carcharhinus brachyurus*), Caribbean sharpnose shark (*Rhizoprionodon porosus*), smalltail shark (*Carcharhinus porosus*), Atlantic angel shark (*Squatina dumeril*), longfin mako (*Isurus paucus*), bigeye thresher (*Alopias superciliosus*), sharpnose sevengill shark (*Heptranchias perlo*), bluntnose sixgill shark (*Hexanchus griseus*), bigeye sixgill

shark (*Hexanchus nakamurai*), and oceanic whitetip shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*).

(j) "Sharks" means all species of sharks other than those comprising the small shark composite as defined in subparagraph 2(k), hammerhead sharks as defined in subparagraph 2(c), prohibited sharks as defined in subparagraph 2(i), and individual species regulated by this rule.

(k) "Small Shark Composite" means a group of sharks inclusive of Atlantic sharpnose shark (*Rhizoprionodon terraenovae*), bonnethead (*Sphyrna tiburo*), and spiny dogfish (*Squalus acanthias*).

(3) Seasons, Daily Creel and Possession Limits, Minimum and Maximum Size Limits. The following species may be taken in accordance with the seasons, daily creel and possession limits, and minimum and maximum size limits set forth below, except as otherwise specifically provided herein:

SPECIES	SEASON	Daily Creel and Possession Limit	Minimum Size (inches)	Maximum Size (inches)
(a) Amberjack	All Year	1	28 FL	
(b) Atlantic Croaker	All Year	25		
(c) Atlantic Sturgeon	No Open Season has been established by the Board of Natural Resources.			
(d) Black Drum	All Year	15	14 TL	
(e) Black Sea Bass	All Year	15	12 TL	
(f) Reserved				
(g) Bluefish	All Year	15	12 FL	
(h) Cobia	March 1 – October 31	1 per person not to exceed 6 per boat	36 FL	

(i) Dolphin	All Year	10 per person not to exceed 54 per boat.	20 FL	
1. Headboats with a valid certificate of inspection are allowed 10 dolphin per paying passenger.				
(j) Flounder (<i>Paralichthys spp.</i>)	All Year	15	12 TL	
(k) Gag Grouper	All Year	2	24 TL	
(l) King Mackerel	All Year	3	24 FL	
(m) Red Drum	All Year	5 ₃	14 TL <u>15 TL</u>	23 TL <u>24 TL</u>
(n) Red Porgy	All Year	3	14 TL	
(o) Red Snapper	All Year	2	20 TL	
(p) Reserved				
(q) Prohibited Sharks	Unlawful to possess.			
(r) Sharks				
(r.1.) Small Shark Composite	All Year	1	30 FL	
(r.2.) Sharks			54 FL	
(r.3.) Hammerhead Sharks			78 FL	
(r.4.) Shortfin Mako Shark	When Federal Quota is Available	1 per person or boat	83 FL	
(s) Sheepshead	All Year	15	10 FL	
(t) Reserved				
(u) Spanish Mackerel	All Year	15	12 FL	
1. A catch of Spanish mackerel under the minimum size limit is allowed equal to five percent by weight of the total catch of Spanish mackerel on board a trawler.				
(v) Spot	All Year	25		

Saltwater Fishing Regulations

Subject 391-2-4

(w) Spotted Seatrout	All Year	15	14 TL	
(x) Tarpon	All Year	1	68 FL	
(y) Tripletail	All Year	2	18 TL	
(z) Weakfish	All Year	1	13 TL	
(aa) Reserved				
(bb) American Eel	All Year	25	9 TL	

(4) Restrictions on Sale. It shall be unlawful for any person in this state to sell, purchase, or barter any of the following species or part thereof, except as otherwise specifically provided herein:

(a) No person operating as a dealer may buy or sell sharks, small shark composite species, hammerhead sharks, and Shortfin Mako Sharks caught in state waters without first obtaining a federal Commercial Shark Dealer Permit and when state or federal quotas for species within those groups have been reached.

(b) Tarpon.

(c) No person may sell any fish managed under federal law and harvested from either Georgia waters or the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone except when the catch of such fish is allowed by applicable federal law. This prohibition of sale does not apply to fish harvested, landed, and sold in compliance with applicable federal law and held in cold storage by a seafood dealer or processor. This prohibition also does not apply to a seafood dealer's purchase or sale of fish harvested from waters other than those of Georgia or the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone, provided such fish is accompanied by documentation of legal harvest.

(d) Reserved

(e) Reserved

(5) Possession and Landing Specifications.

(a) All fish subject to restrictions specified in this Rule may be possessed in state waters or landed only with head and fins intact, except that when landed for commercial purposes, all sharks, small shark composite species, hammerhead sharks, and Shortfin Mako Sharks may have the heads removed but fins and tail must remain naturally attached.

(b) It shall be unlawful to transfer at sea in State waters from a fishing vessel to any other vessel or person any fish caught which are subject to the restrictions specified in this Rule.

(c) Except as otherwise provided by law, it shall be unlawful to fish for sharks, small shark composite species, hammerhead sharks, or Shortfin Mako Sharks for recreational purposes with any gear other than rod and reel or handline as defined in subparagraph (2)(d) above. Additionally, anglers must use non-offset, corrodible, non-stainless-steel circle hooks when fishing for sharks recreationally, except when fishing with flies or artificial lures.

(d) Except as otherwise provided by law, trawlers fishing for shrimp for human consumption pursuant to Code Section 27-4-133 shall be exempt from the creel and possession limits for spot and Atlantic croaker.

(e) Except as otherwise specifically provided herein, in state waters the size, catch, creel and possession limits, fishing period closures, and requirements pertaining to the taking, release, landing, sale, purchase, trade, or barter of billfish shall be prescribed by federal regulations implemented under the Fishery Conservation and Management Act (PL 94-265) and the Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan.

Authority: O.C.G.A. §§ 12-2-24, 27-1-4, 27-4-10.

EXACT COPY

**RULES
OF
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

**CHAPTER 391-2
COASTAL RESOURCES**

**SUBJECT 391-2-4
SALTWATER FISHING REGULATIONS**

391-2-4-.04 Saltwater Finfishing

(1) **Purpose.** The purpose of these Rules is to implement the authority of the Board of Natural Resources to promulgate rules and regulations based on sound principles of wildlife research and management, establishing the seasons, methods of fishing, and disposition; size, possession, and creel limits; and gear and landing specifications for certain finfish.

(2) **Definitions.**

(a) "Billfish" means Blue Marlin (*Makaira nigricans*), White Marlin (*Tetrapturus albidus*) and Sailfish (*Istiophorus albicans*).

(b) "Daily creel limit" means the lawful amount of a species of finfish that a person may take in one day or possess at any one-time, except at one's place of abode or at a commercial storage facility provided the Board has not prohibited sale of that species.

(c) "Hammerhead Sharks" means a group of sharks inclusive of Great Hammerhead (*Sphyrna mokarran*), Scalloped Hammerhead (*Sphyrna lewini*) and Smooth Hammerhead (*Sphyrna zygaena*).

(d) "Handline" means a mainline to which no more than two hooks are attached and which is retrieved by hand without the aid of mechanical devices.

(e) "Landed" means to bring fish to shore in this state, regardless of the jurisdiction from which they were taken or harvested.

(f) "Minimum size" means the species' specific size in length, specified as fork length, lower jaw fork length or total length, below which size it is unlawful to possess that finfish species.

(g) "Maximum size" means the species' specific size in length, specified as fork length, lower jaw fork length or total length, above which size it is unlawful to possess that finfish species.

(h) "Open Season" means that specified period of time during which one may take from any of the waters of this state certain finfish species.

(i) "Prohibited Sharks" means a group of sharks inclusive of sand tiger (*Carcharia staurus*), sandbar shark (*Carcharhinus plumbeus*), silky shark (*Carcharhinus falciformis*), bigeye sandtiger (*Odontaspis noronhai*), whale shark (*Rhincodon typus*), basking shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*), white shark (*Carcharodon carcharias*), dusky shark (*Carcharhinus obscurus*), bignose shark (*Carcharhinus altimus*), Galapagos shark (*Carcharhinus galapagensis*), night shark (*Carcharhinus signatus*), reef shark (*Carcharhinus perezii*), narrowtooth shark (*Carcharhinus brachyurus*), Caribbean sharpnose shark (*Rhizoprionodon porosus*), smalltail shark (*Carcharhinus porosus*), Atlantic angel shark (*Squatina dumeril*), longfin mako (*Isurus paucus*), bigeye thresher (*Alopias superciliosus*), sharpnose sevengill shark (*Heptanchias perlo*), bluntnose sixgill shark (*Hexanchus griseus*), bigeye sixgill shark (*Hexanchus nakamurai*), and oceanic whitetip shark (*Carcharhinus longimanus*).

Saltwater Fishing Regulations

Subject 391-2-4

(j) "Sharks" means all species of sharks other than those comprising the small shark composite as defined in subparagraph 2(k), hammerhead sharks as defined in subparagraph 2(c), prohibited sharks as defined in subparagraph 2(i), and individual species regulated by this rule.

(k) "Small Shark Composite" means a group of sharks inclusive of Atlantic sharpnose shark (*Rhizoprionodon terraenovae*), bonnethead (*Sphyrna tiburo*), and spiny dogfish (*Squalus acanthias*).

(3) Seasons, Daily Creel and Possession Limits, Minimum and Maximum Size Limits. The following species may be taken in accordance with the seasons, daily creel and possession limits, and minimum and maximum size limits set forth below, except as otherwise specifically provided herein:

SPECIES	SEASON	Daily Creel and Possession Limit	Minimum Size (inches)	Maximum Size (inches)
(a) Amberjack	All Year	1	28 FL	
(b) Atlantic Croaker	All Year	25		
(c) Atlantic Sturgeon	No Open Season has been established by the Board of Natural Resources.			
(d) Black Drum	All Year	15	14 TL	
(e) Black Sea Bass	All Year	15	12 TL	
(f) Reserved				
(g) Bluefish	All Year	15	12 FL	
(h) Cobia	March 1 – October 31	1 per person not to exceed 6 per boat	36 FL	
(i) Dolphin	All Year	10 per person not to exceed 54 per boat.	20 FL	

1. Headboats with a valid certificate of inspection are allowed 10 dolphin per paying passenger.				
(j) Flounder (<i>Paralichthys spp.</i>)	All Year	15	12 TL	
(k) Gag Grouper	All Year	2	24 TL	
(l) King Mackerel	All Year	3	24 FL	
(m) Red Drum	All Year	3	15 TL	24 TL
(n) Red Porgy	All Year	3	14 TL	
(o) Red Snapper	All Year	2	20 TL	
(p) Reserved				
(q) Prohibited Sharks	Unlawful to possess.			
(r) Sharks				
(r.1.) Small Shark Composite	All Year	1	30 FL	
(r.2.) Sharks		1 per person or boat	54 FL	
(r.3.) Hammerhead Sharks			78 FL	
(r.4.) Shortfin Mako Shark	When Federal Quota is Available		83 FL	
(s) Sheepshead	All Year	15	10 FL	
(t) Reserved				
(u) Spanish Mackerel	All Year	15	12 FL	
1. A catch of Spanish mackerel under the minimum size limit is allowed equal to five percent by weight of the total catch of Spanish mackerel on board a trawler.				
(v) Spot	All Year	25		
(w) Spotted Seatrout	All Year	15	14 TL	
(x) Tarpon	All Year	1	68 FL	
(y) Tripletail	All Year	2	18 TL	
(z) Weakfish	All Year	1	13 TL	

(aa) Reserved				
(bb) American Eel	All Year	25	9 TL	

(4) Restrictions on Sale. It shall be unlawful for any person in this state to sell, purchase, or barter any of the following species or part thereof, except as otherwise specifically provided herein:

(a) No person operating as a dealer may buy or sell sharks, small shark composite species, hammerhead sharks, and Shortfin Mako Sharks caught in state waters without first obtaining a federal Commercial Shark Dealer Permit and when state or federal quotas for species within those groups have been reached.

(b) Tarpon.

(c) No person may sell any fish managed under federal law and harvested from either Georgia waters or the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone except when the catch of such fish is allowed by applicable federal law. This prohibition of sale does not apply to fish harvested, landed, and sold in compliance with applicable federal law and held in cold storage by a seafood dealer or processor. This prohibition also does not apply to a seafood dealer's purchase or sale of fish harvested from waters other than those of Georgia or the South Atlantic Exclusive Economic Zone, provided such fish is accompanied by documentation of legal harvest.

(d) Reserved

(e) Reserved

(5) Possession and Landing Specifications.

(a) All fish subject to restrictions specified in this Rule may be possessed in state waters or landed only with head and fins intact, except that when landed for commercial purposes, all sharks, small shark composite species, hammerhead sharks, and Shortfin Mako Sharks may have the heads removed but fins and tail must remain naturally attached.

(b) It shall be unlawful to transfer at sea in State waters from a fishing vessel to any other vessel or person any fish caught which are subject to the restrictions specified in this Rule.

(c) Except as otherwise provided by law, it shall be unlawful to fish for sharks, small shark composite species, hammerhead sharks, or Shortfin Mako Sharks for recreational purposes with any gear other than rod and reel or handline as defined in subparagraph (2)(d) above. Additionally, anglers must use non-offset, corrodible, non-stainless-steel circle hooks when fishing for sharks recreationally, except when fishing with flies or artificial lures.

(d) Except as otherwise provided by law, trawlers fishing for shrimp for human consumption pursuant to Code Section 27-4-133 shall be exempt from the creel and possession limits for spot and Atlantic croaker.

(e) Except as otherwise specifically provided herein, in state waters the size, catch, creel and possession limits, fishing period closures, and requirements pertaining to the taking, release, landing, sale, purchase, trade, or barter of billfish shall be prescribed by federal regulations implemented under the Fishery Conservation and Management Act (PL 94-265) and the Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan.

Authority: O.C.G.A. §§ 12-2-24, 27-1-4, 27-4-10.