

**Possession and Use of Game Fish**

1. It is unlawful to take, in any one day, more than the daily creel limit of any inland game fish having a specified creel limit.
2. It is unlawful to possess more than the daily creel limit while fishing, boating or afield; or to possess at any place more than three days' creel limit.
3. It is unlawful to possess fish whose size, creel or season restrictions are not in compliance with the regulations on the waters being fished.
4. It is unlawful, while fishing, to change the appearance of fish subject to size limits or daily creel limits or remove the head and/or tail from fish that are regulated by a size limit so that they may not be measured and/or identified.
5. It is unlawful to destroy unnecessarily any inland game fish taken from public fishing waters.
6. Inland game fish may be used as bait if they are legally taken and are in agreement with the size and creel limits of the waters being fished and other regulations.

**Seasons** There are no closed seasons on inland game fishes with the following exceptions:

1. In Hatchery-Supported Trout Waters, where the season for all fishes is closed and fishing is prohibited from March 1–April 6, 2012. This closed season for fishing does not apply to power supply lakes or municipal water supply lakes.
2. In undesignated waters where it is unlawful to possess trout caught during the closed season (March 1–April 6, 2012).
3. On the Lake Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge, where federal regulations apply.
4. On the Mackay Island National Wildlife Refuge, where federal regulations apply and specified waters are closed to access between Oct. 15 and March 15.
5. On the Roanoke River, where the striped bass season is closed from May 1–end of February from the Roanoke Rapids Dam downstream to the mouth of the river at the Albemarle Sound, unless changed by proclamation of the Executive Director, Wildlife Resources Commission.

| BASS IDENTIFICATION CHART   | MORONE IDENTIFICATION CHART   |
|---|---|
| <p>Longest spine over twice as long as shortest spine</p> <p>Deep notch between fins</p> <p>Upper jaw extends beyond eye</p> <p>No scales at base of fin</p> <p>Horizontal band</p> <p>No scales at base of fin</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Largemouth Bass</b><br/><i>Found statewide</i></p>  | <p>Stripes often faint</p> <p>One patch of teeth on tongue</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>White Bass</b></p>   |
| <p>Longest spine less than twice the length of shortest spine</p> <p>Shallow notch between fins</p> <p>Upper jaw extends to back of eye</p> <p>Scales at base of fin</p> <p>One patch of teeth on tongue</p> <p>Horizontal streaks</p> <p>Scales at base of fin</p> <p>Horizontal band</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Spotted Bass</b><br/><i>Found in the mountains, foothills and Little River in Harnett County</i></p> | <p>Stripes distinct and usually continuous</p> <p>Two patches of teeth on tongue</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Striped Bass</b></p>                     |
| <p>Longest spine less than twice the length of shortest spine</p> <p>Shallow notch between fins</p> <p>Upper jaw doesn't extend beyond back of eye</p> <p>Scales at base of fin</p> <p>Vertical bars</p> <p>Scales at base of fin</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Smallmouth Bass</b><br/><i>Found in the mountains and foothills</i></p>   | <p>Stripes distinct and usually broken</p> <p>Two patches of teeth on tongue</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Bodie Bass</b><br/>(striped bass hybrid)</p> |

6. In the Central-Southern Striped Bass Management Area where it is unlawful to possess striped bass or striped bass hybrids from May 1 – Sept. 30.
7. In Cape Fear River and tributaries below Buckhorn Dam where possession of striped bass and Bodie (hybrid) striped bass is prohibited.
8. In Sutton Lake, where possession of largemouth bass is prohibited from Dec. 1 – March 31.
9. Fishing is prohibited from Feb. 15 – April 15 in the Linville River from the mouth, as marked at Lake James, upstream to the N.C. 126 bridge.
10. Seasons and size and creel limits for spotted sea trout, flounder, and red drum are the same as those recreational limits established by Division of Marine Fisheries in adjacent joint and coastal fishing

waters. For current limits, see [www.ncfisheries.net/recreational/recguide.htm](http://www.ncfisheries.net/recreational/recguide.htm) or call 252-726-7021 or 800-682-2632.

**TROT LINES, SET-HOOKS AND JUG-HOOKS**

- Trotlines, set-hooks and jug-hooks may be fished under any license that authorizes basic fishing privileges.
- It is unlawful to use live bait with trotlines, set-hooks or jug-hooks.
- Trotlines (a line with multiple hooks) must be set parallel to the nearest shore in all public waters, where their use is authorized.
- Each trotline, set-hook and jug-hook shall have attached the name and address of the user legibly inscribed.
- Each trotline shall be conspicuously marked at each end, and each set-hook shall be conspicuously marked at one end with a prominent flag or floating object.

**REGULATIONS FOR WARMWATER GAME FISH**

State waters are classified as: inland, joint and coastal (see “General Information” on page 16). These state waters are collectively referred to as public fishing waters. Certain fishes, including largemouth bass, crappie and mountain trout are designated inland

game fish and under the jurisdiction of the Wildlife Resources Commission in all public waters; whereas, some species, including striped bass, white and yellow perch, flounder and red drum, are designated as inland game fish only in inland waters (see list on page 16).

| LOCATION   | SIZE LIMIT  | DAILY CREEL LIMIT*   |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Black bass (including largemouth, smallmouth and spotted)</b><br>- Roanoke River downstream of Roanoke Rapids Dam<br>- Tar River downstream of Tar River Reservoir Dam<br>- Neuse River downstream of Falls Lake Dam<br>- Lake Raleigh (Wake Co.)<br>- Haw River downstream of Jordan Lake Dam<br>- Deep River downstream of Lockville Dam<br>- Cape Fear River<br>- Waccamaw River downstream of Lake Waccamaw Dam<br>- Lumber River, including Drowning Creek<br>- All other public waters east of Interstate 95, except Tar River Reservoir (Nash Co.)<br>- South Yadkin River downstream of Cooleemee Dam<br>- Yadkin-Pee Dee River from Idols Dam to the South Carolina state line, including High Rock Lake, Tuckertown Reservoir, Badin Lake, Falls Lake (Stanly and Montgomery counties), Lake Tillery and Blewett Falls Lake.<br>- Randleman Reservoir (Randolph and Guilford counties)<br>- Lake Luke Marion (Moore Co.)<br>- Reedy Creek Park lakes (Mecklenburg Co.)<br>- Lake Rim (Cumberland Co.) | 14-inch minimum   | 5 in combination   |
| - Lake Norman  | Largemouth and spotted bass:<br>14-inch minimum, except that 2 may be less than 14 inches   | 5 in combination   |
| - Sutton Lake (New Hanover Co.)  | 14-inch minimum<br><u>Dec. 1–March 31:</u><br>No bass may be possessed.   | 5 in combination<br><u>Dec. 1–March 31:</u><br>No bass may be possessed.   |
| - Buckhorn Reservoir (Wilson and Nash counties)<br>- Cane Creek Lake (Union Co.)   | 16-inch minimum   | 5 in combination   |
| - Lake Thom-A-Lex (Davidson Co.)   | 18-inch minimum   | 5 in combination   |
| - Shearon Harris Reservoir   | 14-inch minimum, except that 2 may be less than 14 inches and no fish between 16-20 inches may be possessed   | 5 in combination, including only 2 less than 14 inches   |
| - Lake Phelps  | 14-inch minimum and no fish between 16-20 inches may be possessed   | 5 in combination   |
| - New River (Alleghany Co. portion downstream of Fields Dam in Grayson Co., Va.)   | No minimum size and no bass between 14-20 inches may be possessed.  | 5 in combination, including only 1 bass greater than 20 inches   |
| - Public Mountain Trout Waters and waters in and west of Madison, Buncombe, Henderson and Polk counties  | 12-inch minimum, except that 2 may be less than 12 inches   | 5 in combination, including only 2 less than 12 inches   |
| - All other public fishing waters  | Largemouth: 14-inch minimum, except that 2 may be less than 14 inches<br>Smallmouth & spotted bass: 12-inch minimum, except that 2 may be less than 12 inches | 5 in combination, including only 2 largemouth less than 14 inches and 2 smallmouth or spotted bass less than 12 inches |

\*Please note: “In combination” means the total number for all species combined.

- Metal cans and glass containers cannot be used as markers.
- The number of jug-hooks that may be fished is limited to 70 per boat.
- Trotlines, throwlines, set-hooks and jug-hooks must be fished daily, and all fish must be removed daily.
- Untended trotlines, set-hooks and jug-hooks, as evidenced by the absence of bait, may be removed from the water by wildlife enforcement officers.
- Blue crabs may be taken recreationally with a single line with multiple baits without hooks (see restrictions under “Taking Nongame Fish, Crustaceans, and Mollusks for Bait or Personal Consumption” on pages 28 –29).

*Exceptions*

- No trotlines or set-hooks may be used in the impounded waters of Sandhills Game Land, in Public Mountain Trout Waters, or in Cheoah Lake.
- In Lake Waccamaw, it is unlawful to use trotlines or set-hooks from May 1–Sept. 30.

**STATE FISH HATCHERIES**

- It is unlawful to fish at any time in the waters or on the property of any state fish hatchery, including Bones Creek from the Lake Rim Dam to the U.S. 401 Bypass (Raeford Road), except McKinney Lake Reservoir at McKinney Lake State Fish Hatchery.

| LOCATION   | SIZE LIMIT  | DAILY CREEL LIMIT  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Striped bass and Bodie bass<br/>(Inland impoundments and tributaries)</b>   |   |  |
| - John H. Kerr Reservoir<br>- Dan River in Caswell Co., N.C., downstream of Danville, Va.  | <u>Oct. 1–May 31:</u><br>26-inch minimum.<br><u>June 1–Sept. 30:</u><br>No minimum size limit               | <u>Oct. 1–May 31:</u><br>2 in combination<br><u>June 1–Sept. 30:</u><br>4 in combination                               |
| - Cape Fear River upstream of Buckhorn Dam and the Deep and Haw rivers to the first impoundment<br>- B. Everett Jordan Reservoir   | 20-inch minimum   | 4 in combination   |
| - Lake Gaston<br>- Roanoke Rapids Reservoir  | <u>Oct. 1–May 31:</u><br>20-inch minimum<br><u>June 1–Sept. 30:</u><br>No minimum size limit                | 4 in combination   |
| - Lake Norman  | <u>Oct. 1–May 31:</u><br>16-inch minimum.<br><u>June 1–Sept. 30:</u><br>no minimum size limit               | 4 in combination   |
| - Other impounded inland waters and their tributaries  | 16-inch minimum, except that 2 may be less than 16 inches   | 8 in combination, including only 2 fish less than 16 inches  |
| <b>Striped bass and Bodie bass<br/>(Coastal rivers and impoundments)</b>   |   |  |
| <i>Roanoke River Striped Bass Management Area</i> (including Roanoke, Cashie, Middle and Eastmost rivers and their tributaries)<br>- Roanoke Rapids Dam downstream to mouth of the river at Albemarle Sound  | Season - March 1–April 30 (unless closed by proclamation):<br>18-inch minimum, no fish between 22-27 inches | Season - March 1–April 30 (unless closed by proclamation):<br>2 in combination including only 1 greater than 27 inches |
| <i>Albemarle Sound Striped Bass Management Area</i> (including Roanoke Sound, Croatan Sound, Albemarle Sound, Currituck Sound, Chowan, Yeopim, Perquimans, Little, Pasquotank, North, Alligator and Scuppernong rivers and their tributaries)  | Established by Division of Marine Fisheries   | Established by Division of Marine Fisheries  |
| <i>Central-Southern Striped Bass Management Area</i> , inland and joint waters including:<br>- Tar-Pamlico River and tributaries from Rocky Mount Mill Dam downstream to N & S Railroad Bridge at Washington<br>- Neuse River and tributaries from Milburnie Dam downstream to Southern Railroad Bridge at New Bern<br>- Pungo River<br>- All other unlisted inland and joint waters of coastal rivers and their tributaries, except Cape Fear River and tributaries | Season - Oct. 1–April 30<br>18-inch minimum and no fish between 22-27 inches                                | Season- Oct. 1–April 30<br>2 in combination  |
| <i>Central-Southern Striped Bass Management Area</i> , coastal waters including:<br>- Tar-Pamlico River downstream of the N & S Railroad Bridge at Washington, including Pamlico Sound and tributaries designated as coastal waters<br>- Neuse River downstream of Southern Railroad Bridge at New Bern, including Pamlico Sound and tributaries designated as coastal waters<br>- All other unlisted coastal waters   | Established by Division of Marine Fisheries   | Established by Division of Marine Fisheries  |
| <i>Central-Southern Striped Bass Management Area</i> , inland, joint and coastal waters of:<br>- Cape Fear River and tributaries downstream of Buckhorn Dam<br>- Pee Dee River and tributaries downstream of Blewett Falls Dam<br>- Lake Mattamuskeet  | No striped bass may be possessed  | No striped bass may be possessed   |
|  | 18-inch minimum   | 3 in combination   |

