

## Bahamas - Bahamian Fishing Laws

In order to conserve The Bahamian marine environment, fishing and diving in The Bahamas are governed by rules administered by The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Those breaking laws governing size limitation, fishing seasons, allowable fishing tools and prohibitions may face heavy fines and penalties. Following is a summary of the Fisheries Resources (Jurisdiction and Conservation) Regulations, courtesy of the Bahamas Handbook.

\* Spearfishing using underwater breathing apparatus is illegal. Exceptions include compressors with a permit issued only to Bahamians only and used only between August 1 to March 31 and in water depths of 30 to 60 ft. Visitors may use an air compressor for observation purposes only and may not harvest any resources while using it.

\* It is illegal to use any device other than a hawaiian sling for the discharge of a missile underwater.

\* Foreign vessels intending to engage in sport fishing must have a permit and several rules apply under this permit. Fishing gear is restricted to hook and line unless otherwise authorized. Only 6 lines are allowed in the water at one time, unless otherwise authorized. Cost of the permit is \$20 per trip or \$150 annually. If more than 6 reels are allowed on a party fishing boat for instance the permit is \$10,000 annually. The bag limit for Kingfish, Dolphin and Wahoo is a maximum combined total of 6 fish per person on the vessel, comprising any combination of these species. Vessel bag limits for other marine products are 20lbs. of scalefish, 10 conch, and 6 crawfish per person at any time. The possession of Turtle is prohibited. The above amounts may be exported by the vessel upon leaving The Bahamas.

\* A \$50 permit is required to conduct foreign fishing for scientific or research purposes. A license is required to engage in foreign fishing -- fishing by a non-Bahamian vessel for commercial purposes. Such permission can only be issued to foreign states which have a fishery treaty with The Bahamas.

\* Bahamian commercial fishing vessels 20ft in length or greater must get a valid fishing permit. "Bahamian" in relation to a fishing vessel is one bona fide owned by a citizen of The Bahamas, resident in The Bahamas or a company registered in The Bahamas under the Companies Act in which all the shares are beneficially owned by citizens of The Bahamas resident in The Bahamas. It is illegal to export any marine product for commercial purposes unless the person involved has an export license for the product he wishes to export, or the product is inspected by a fisheries inspector at the time of export and export-duty on the product is paid. A \$10 permit is required for the use of an air compressor (hookah) in fishing. Its use is restricted to Aug 1 - Mar 31, and to a water depth range of 30-60ft.

\* It is illegal to use: a) bleach or other noxious or poisonous substances for fishing or have such substances on a fishing vessel without written approval from the Minister; b) use firearms or explosives; c) spearfish within one mile of the coast of New Providence and the southern coast of Grand Bahaman, and 200 yards off the coast of all other family islands; d) use fish nets with a minimum mesh gauge of less than 2 inches; e) use a scalefish trap which does not have a self destruct panel and minimum mesh sizes less than 1 x 2in for rectangular wire mesh traps and 1.5 in for hexagonal wire mesh trap; f) take corals; g) build artificial reefs without permission from the Minister; h) sell fish in New Providence without a permit from the minister.

\* Closed Season for crawfish (spiny lobster) is April 1 to July 31. Minimum size limit for crawfish is a carapace length of 3 1/4 in from the base of the horns to the end of the jacket, or 5 1/2 in tail length. A \$10 permit is required to trap crawfish. Traps should be wooden slat traps not more than 3 ft. in length, 2 ft. in width and 2 ft. in height with slats not less than 1 in. apart. The possession of egg-bearing female crawfish is prohibited.

\* Closed season for stone crabs is June 1 to October 15th. Minimum crab claw is 4 in. Possessing or selling the female stone crab is prohibited.

\* \* Long line fishing in Bahamian waters is illegal unless there is special written permission from the Governor General. Long line fishing includes fishing by means of a line or cable which extends 20 yards from the point where it is cast and to which is attached 10 hooks.

\* Closed season for turtles is April 1 - July 31. Minimum size limit for a green turtle is 24 in back length and for a loggerhead turtle 30 in back length. Taking or possessing turtle eggs is prohibited. All turtles captured must be landed whole. It is illegal to catch Hawksbill Turtles in The Bahamas.

\* It is illegal to harvest conch which does not possess a well formed lip or sponge less than 5.5 in. diameter for wool and grass, 1 in. diameter for hard head and reef sponge.

\* It is illegal to buy or sell bonefish. It is illegal to fish for them using nets.

\* It is illegal to export hermit crabs.

\* It is illegal to export live rock or small reef fish for commercial purposes.

\* It is illegal to catch grouper and rockfish weighing less than three lbs

\* It is illegal to fish for, export, molest or interfere with any marine mammal.

\* It is illegal to uproot, destroy or take any corals.