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## **DNR LICENSE OFFICE LOCATIONS**

Commercial licenses are available from:

- (1) DNR, One Conservation Way, Brunswick, GA 31520-8687.  
License office hours are 8am - 4pm, Mon-Fri;  
(912) 264-7237; and
- (2) DNR, Demeries Creek, 22814 Highway 144,  
Richmond Hill, GA 31324.  
License office hours are 8am - 4pm,  
Mon-Fri.; (912) 727-2111.

**Note:** Commercial castnetting and crabbing licenses are only available from the Brunswick location.

## **DEFINITIONS and ABBREVIATIONS**

Daily Creel Limit means the lawful amount of a species of finfish or other seafood that a person may take in one day.

Minimum Size means the smallest allowable size finfish or other seafood that can be kept.

Open Season means that specified period of time during which one may take certain finfish species or other seafood.

Georgia Department of Natural Resources: Department, DNR

Coastal Resources Division: CRD

National Marine Fisheries Service: NMFS

South Atlantic Fishery Management Council: SAFMC

Turtle Excluder Device: TED

Bycatch Reduction Device: BRD

## **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

Fishermen who take finfish or other seafood for commercial sale must possess a valid commercial fishing license and if a boat is used, a commercial boat license.

**Commercial fishermen must abide by season, creel and size limits when harvesting any of the finfish for which the Georgia General Assembly or the Board of Natural Resources (Board) has created regulations.** (See Finfish Harvest Table) However, individuals fishing with a valid federal commercial fishing permit in federal waters may exceed the creel limits provided those waters are open for commercial fishing with specified gear, minimum size limits are observed, the quota has not been met, and the Board has not prohibited sale of the species. Finfish for which there are minimum sizes and/or creel and possession limits must be landed head and fins intact. Transfer at sea is prohibited. (O.C.G.A. 127-4-130.1)

Information on federal commercial fishing permits may be obtained from the NMFS, Southeast Regional Office, 9721 Executive Center Drive, St. Petersburg, FL 33702, 727-570-5326.

## **COMMERCIAL LICENSES**

(O.C.G.A. 27-2-23)

**Commercial Fishing License:** Each person engaged in commercial fishing within Georgia waters is required to have this license. A commercial fishing license costs a resident \$12.00 and a nonresident \$118.00. This license is separate and distinct from the commercial fishing boat license, crab license and castnet license (O.C.G.A. 27-4-110).

**Trawler Boat License:** In order to obtain a commercial trawler license which is required for fishing with power-drawn nets, the owner of the boat must do the following: File with the DNR a \$5,000 forfeiture bond obtained from a bonding surety or insurance company licensed to do business in Georgia; or, provided the boat is not a documented vessel, file with DNR a signed affidavit stating that he or she is the sole owner of the boat, and that the boat is owned free and clear from all encumbrances such as liens, mortgages and other evidences of a security interest, and acknowledging that the boat will be subject to confiscation and seizure, as provided in O.C.G.A.

Section 27-4-137, when used in violation of that section of the law (O.C.G.A. 27-4-134). The cost of a trawler license for a Georgia resident is \$50 for the first 18 feet of vessel length, plus \$3 per foot for each additional foot or fraction thereof over 18 feet. The cost of this license to a nonresident is \$25 over the cost to a resident. (O.C.G.A. 27-2-8)

**Identification Boards (for trawlers):** An identification board has a background color of daylight fluorescent orange positioned on the bow or cabin of the boat. The numbers and letters will be assigned by the Department when the boat license is purchased, and must be at least 16 inches in height x 2 inches in width, black in color, of block character, and spaced so as to be readable from the air. (O.C.G.A. 27-4-133 g)

**Note:** Once a licensed boat is used for catching shrimp for bait, the boat may no longer be used to catch shrimp commercially for human consumption. (O.C.G.A. 27-4-171 e)

**Nontrawler Boat License:** If a boat is used for commercial purposes in salt water, a commercial fishing boat license (nontrawler) is required. The nontrawler boat license fee is \$5.00 for the first 18 feet in boat length, plus 50 cents per foot or fraction thereof over the minimum length. The cost of this license for a nonresident is \$25 over the cost to the resident. (O.C.G.A. 27-2-8)

## **MANDATORY RECORDS AND REPORTING**

(O.C.G.A. 27-4-135, 27-4-136, 27-4-150, Board Rule 391-2-4-.09)

Any person harvesting seafood products and/or acting as a seafood dealer is required to submit the following information, on approved forms, to the Department. The forms must be filled out in their entirety at the time a transaction takes place between a harvester and seafood dealer. These forms **must be** submitted to the Department by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month. The information required to be reported on the forms is as follows:

Trip start and end date / Vessel documentation or registration number / Dealer Name / Commercial fishing license number / Area fished / Total fishing time / Number of sets or tows / Days at Sea / Gear / Quantity of gear (number of pots, nets, etc) / Number of crew (including captain) / County and state of landing / Species landed / Quantity landed / Units of measurement (pounds, bushels, etc) / Market category (count size, etc) / Grade (heads on, fillet, etc) / Ex-vessel value or price.

Any questions concerning commercial fishing records should be directed to CRD's Cooperative Statistics Project in Brunswick at (912) 264-7218. Additional forms and return envelopes are available from either DNR location that sells commercial licenses (pg.1).

All master collecting permittees **must** maintain records in a form as prescribed by the Department of Agriculture.

## **SALTWATER DEMARCATION LINE**

(O.C.G.A. 27-4-1)

The line established as Georgia's official separation point between salt and freshwater for purposes of commercial and sport fishing activities is as follows:

1. The point at which U. S. 17 crosses the following bodies of water and their tributaries: St. Marys River, Satilla River, South Altamaha River, Champney River, Butler River, Darien River, Little Ogeechee System (except Salt Creek), North Newport River, Medway River, Big Ogeechee River and Savannah River. All water seaward of these points is considered salt water.
2. The following streams and their tributaries are designated as salt water for their entire length: Crooked River, Little Satilla River, South Brunswick River, Turtle River, Sapelo River, South Newport River, Salt Creek (Little Ogeechee System), and all other rivers, streams and tributaries in the six coastal

counties which are not enumerated above (Chatham, Bryan, Liberty, McIntosh, Glynn and Camden).

NOTE: Fresh water ponds on the seaward side of the official demarcation line are not considered salt waters. Boundary lines demarcating legal waters specific for shrimping, crabbing, commercial eel fishing and commercial catfishing vary from the saltwater demarcation line. Legal waters for these activities are discussed in the respective sections.

## **FEDERAL REGULATIONS**

Federal regulations for commercial fisheries are in effect for many finfish and crustaceans found in federal waters beyond Georgia's three-mile territorial sea. Notable examples of federally regulated species currently include, but are not limited to, MACKERELS, COBIA, BLUEFISH, RED DRUM, RED PORGY, BILLFISH, SNAPPER, GROUPER, AND OTHER REEFISH, SHARKS, SHRIMP AND SPINY LOBSTER. Commercially, these regulations include permitting requirements for both commercial and charter fishing, gear restrictions, size limits, quotas, trip limits, closures, landing and reporting requirements, and more.

**Special Management Zones:** The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) has designated Georgia's artificial reefs sited in federal waters beyond 3 nm as Special Management Zones (SMZs). Under this designation, fishing gear at these 19 reefs is restricted to handline, rod & reel, and spearfishing gear, including powerheads. Harvest utilizing powerheads at the SMZs is limited to the recreational bag limits.

For complete, updated information on federal regulations or permits, size and bag limits, and seasons, commercial fishermen should contact the SAFMC in Charleston at (843) 571-4366, <http://www.safmc.nmfs.gov>; or call NMFS at (727) 570-5326 permits, or (727) 570-5305 fisheries management; <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>.

## **EEZ JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARY LINES**

For the purposes of fisheries management, boundaries have been established that delineate the federal Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) beyond and adjacent to each state's territorial sea. These jurisdictional lines enable the SAFMC and NMFS to recognize and enact measures that may be needed to complement state regulation and/or enhance enforcement. In federal waters off Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida, these boundaries are generally defined as follows:

Georgia - Florida EEZ Jurisdictional Line: A line running 90° True East from St. Marys Entrance Channel Buoy R"10" along the 30° 42' 45.6" North Latitude line to the eastward boundary of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (200 nm).

Georgia - South Carolina EEZ Jurisdictional Line: A line running 104° True from Savannah Entrance Channel Buoy R"6" (31° 59' 16.7" N Latitude, 080° 46' 02.5" W Longitude) to the eastward boundary of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (200 nm).

For specific information regarding these federal EEZ jurisdictional lines, contact NMFS at (727) 570-5305.

## **GEORGIA "BEACH" REEFS**

Three of Georgia's 22 offshore artificial reefs are located within the state's 3 nm territorial sea. Each of these permitted "beach" reef sites covers a 400-yard diameter circular area marked at the center with an all-yellow buoy. Tying to these Coast Guard permitted buoy systems is not allowed.

Water depth clearances over the materials at the "beach" reefs are 10'-12' at Mean Low Water (MLW). Locations of these reefs are as follows:

- Artificial Reef BL: Located approximately 3 nm east of St. Catherines Island, coordinates for the center buoy ("BL") are 31° 38.521' N Latitude, 081° 04.792' W Longitude.
- Artificial Reef BH: Located approximately 2.5 nm east of Blackbeard Island, coordinates for the center buoy ("BH") are 31° 30.391' N Latitude, 081° 06.260' W Longitude.
- Artificial Reef TC: Located approximately 3 nm east of Cumberland Island and 4.5 nm north of the St. Marys entrance channel, coordinates for the center buoy ("TC") are 30° 46.973' N Latitude, 081° 23.975' W Longitude.

For further information on Georgia's artificial reef program, contact CRD at (912) 264-7218.

## **GRAY'S REEF NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY**

Located approximately 18 nm east of Sapelo Island, Gray's Reef was designated a National Marine Sanctuary in 1981. Administered by NOAA, certain activities are prohibited in the Sanctuary to protect the unique marine resources found in this 4x4 nm natural reef area. For information on these regulations and Gray's Reef, call (912) 598-2345 or write to the Sanctuary Manager, Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary, 10 Ocean Science Circle, Savannah, Georgia, 31411. To report violations of federal regulations call the NOAA Fisheries Enforcement Hotline (1-800-853-1964).

## **BOATING SAFETY ZONES**

(O.C.G.A. 52-7-13)

Boating safety zones have been established off the public beaches on Jekyll Island, Tybee Island, St. Simons Island, and Sea Island. These zones consist of waters from the northernmost point to the southernmost point of each of these islands from the highwater mark to a distance 1,000 feet

seaward. From May 1<sup>st</sup> through September 30<sup>th</sup> powerboats, jet skis and other motorized craft are prohibited in these zones.

## **BOATING UNDER THE INFLUENCE LAWS**

(O.C.G.A. 52-7-12)

People who are arrested for boating under the influence (BUI) in Georgia may lose boat operation privileges for up to a year for a first-time conviction, three years for a second conviction, and five years for a third conviction. In addition, they will be charged with a misdemeanor that is punishable with up to \$1,000 fine and/or up to 12 months in prison.

Legislation passed in 1998 established a "zero tolerance" level of .02 for people under age 21 who are caught operating a boat under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Minors who are arrested for BUI face misdemeanor charges punishable with up to \$1,000 fine and/or up to 12 months in prison. The new law created misdemeanor offenses for "endangering a child" if a boat operator transports a child under the age of 14 while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The law allows for the revocation of boating privileges of up to a year for people who refuse a sobriety test when suspected of operating under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and for people whose blood, breath or urine test shows the presence of illegal drugs or an alcohol level of .10 or higher.

For more information on boating laws or other boating safety issues, contact the nearest DNR Law Enforcement Office, Brunswick (912) 264-7237.

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## **SHRIMP TRAWLING**

(O.C.G.A. 27-4-133).

**Licenses:** Each person engaged in commercial food shrimp harvesting is required to have a commercial fishing license (pg. 2). A commercial trawler boat license (pg. 2) is also needed before fishing with power drawn nets in Georgia waters. Each commercial food shrimp trawler must also display an identification board (pg. 3). Harvester/dealer reporting is required (pg. 3).

**Areas and Seasons:** The offshore waters (seaward of the sounds to the three-mile territorial limit) are permanently closed by law to food shrimp trawling from March 1<sup>st</sup> through May 14<sup>th</sup> of each year. Based on sound biological, environmental, economic and social criteria set forth in state law, the DNR Commissioner may open state offshore waters to commercial food shrimping with power drawn nets from May 15<sup>th</sup> through December 31<sup>st</sup> of each year if shrimp counts are 45 or fewer per pound with heads on. During January and February, the Commissioner may open the offshore waters if the shrimp count is 50 or fewer per pound, heads on.

The sounds are permanently closed January 1<sup>st</sup> through August 31<sup>st</sup> each year. Cumberland, St. Andrew, St. Simons, Sapelo, Ossabaw and Wassaw sounds may be opened from September 1<sup>st</sup> through December 31<sup>st</sup> at the Commissioner's discretion.

**Note:** Official notice of the opening or closing of waters is posted by DNR at county courthouses and on shrimp docks at least 24 hours prior to the opening or closing. In addition, newspapers, radio stations and other media are also asked to notify interested persons. Food shrimping with power-drawn nets is never permitted in tidal rivers or creeks.

**Hours:** Commercial food shrimp trawling is legal only between the hours of 5 a.m. and 8 p.m., unless specified otherwise by official notice. Trawling at all other hours is prohibited out to the three-mile limit regardless of whether the waters are open.

When the sounds are open to trawling, power-drawn nets may only be used between 5 a.m. Monday morning and 8 p.m. Saturday afternoon, with the above nighttime closures in effect.

**Size and Catch Limits:** There are no limits on the size, or number or pounds of shrimp that may be taken or possessed by a licensed commercial food shrimper using power drawn nets.

**Net Size Limits:** The maximum footrope length for a single trawl or trawls combined is 220 feet. For purposes of this rule, footrope length is defined as the measure from brail line to brail line, first tie to last tie on the bottom line. The 220 feet maximum does not include a try net up to 16 feet in length. The department may exempt trawls used by persons holding a valid scientific collection permit granted by the Department.

**Identification Boards:** Each boat trawling for food shrimp for commercial purposes will be required to display an identification board on the bow or cabin of the boat (pg. 3).

**Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs):** (Board Rule 391-2-4-.05). Commercial food shrimp trawlers must have a certified turtle excluder device (TED) in each net. A certified TED is one that has been approved for use by the NMFS. There are several basic TED designs that have been approved by NMFS for use in Federal and therefore state waters.

Current regulations to protect sea turtles include measures that establish Shrimp Fishery / Sea Turtle Conservation Areas where shrimping effort and sea turtle abundance are high.

TEDs are not required in try nets with a headrope length of 12 feet or less. Hand retrieved trawl nets (no mechanical retrieval) do not require a TED so long as applicable tow times are adhered to.

For information on federal TED regulations, modification or installation instructions, tow times or conservation areas, call or write: Protected Species Management Branch, NMFS,

9721 Executive Center Drive, St. Petersburg, FL, 33702. Phone: (727) 570-5312; Fax (727) 570-5512.

To find TED information on the internet, go to:  
[http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/cfrhtml\\_00/Title\\_50/50cfr223\\_00.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/cfrhtml_00/Title_50/50cfr223_00.html).

**Bycatch Reduction Device Requirement (BRDs):** (Board Rule 391-2-4-.08) All food shrimp trawls with a headrope length greater than 16 feet, including try nets and hand-retrieved nets, operating in Georgia and federal waters must have a certified bycatch reduction device (BRD) installed in each net. All certified BRD's are to be used in conjunction with an approved Turtle Excluder Device in nets required to have a TED.

There are three certified BRD models available for use in both federal and state waters including:

1. Eight inch outer mesh, Expanded Mesh/Extended Funnel; &
2. Ten inch outer mesh, Expanded Mesh/Extended Funnel; &
3. The 12-inch by 5-inch Fisheye.

There are two additional BRDs currently approved for use only in Georgia's state waters:

1. 9-inch by 4.5-inch North Carolina Fisheye BRD (9" x 4.5" or greater exit opening, with surface area not less than 20 square inches); &
2. 6.5-inch North Carolina Diamond BRD (6.5" x 5.5" or greater exit opening, with a surface area not less than 19 square inches).

Contact DNR for information on installation specifications. Additional models may be included as they pass state and/or federal certification. Please contact CRD if you wish information on how to have a BRD tested for certification.

**Note:** Any BRD certified by NMFS is allowable in Georgia waters. BRD's currently certified for use in federal waters are

also described in Amendment 2 to the SAFMC Shrimp Management Plan.

**Wanton Waste:** Sort or cull your catch on the water. Return any undersized or unwanted wildlife to the water alive. When you throw away wildlife you are not only wasting valuable resources, you are also breaking the law.

Persons caught dumping wildlife or parts thereof will be charged with littering (O.C.G.A. 16-7-43). Those convicted of littering and dumping wildlife are subject to fines of \$25 to \$300 and may be required to pick up and remove any and all litter from any public street, highway or right of way within one mile of where such discard was deposited. In addition, the court may publish the names of persons convicted of violating these laws.

To report a violation of the law please call the nearest Georgia DNR Law Enforcement office. Brunswick office (912) 264-7237; Demeris Creek office (912) 727-2111; or the **Toll Free 24-hour hot line: 1-800-241-4113.**

## **BAIT SHRIMPING**

(O.C.G.A. 27-4-171, Board Rule 391-2-4-.06)

**Licenses:** A Bait Dealer's License (below) and commercial fishing license (pg. 2) are required before anyone may take and sell shrimp for live or dead bait. However, a full-time employee of a licensed bait dealer who possesses a commercial fishing license may land bait shrimp for the dealer. A part-time employee of a bait dealership may sell shrimp at that bait dealership but may not participate in the collection.

The cost of a bait dealer's license is \$25 for a resident and \$150 for a nonresident. In addition, an applicant for a bait dealer's license must file with DNR a \$2,000 forfeiture bond, obtained from a bonding, surety or insurance company licensed to do business in Georgia. The forfeiture bond is conditioned upon the faithful compliance by the bait dealer and all his or her employees with the laws and regulations relating to the taking, sale and possession of bait shrimp. Before the Department

issues a bait dealer license, it will inspect the bait dealer facilities to determine compliance with the below mentioned requirements. A trawler boat license is also required (pg. 2).

NO bait dealer or employee of a bait dealer can be issued both a bait dealer license AND a commercial food shrimp castnet license. A current bait dealer license becomes invalid when the holder obtains a commercial food shrimp castnet license.

**Sale of Bait Shrimp:** A bait dealer must publicly advertise his facility by display of a sign on the facility drive and dock reading "Live Bait for Sale" and the hours and days of operation. Signs must be at least 24" X 18" with letters and numbers at least three inches in height. The dealer must also display any current business license required by the city or county and sales tax registration certificate.

When sold, live bait shrimp must be in a container large enough to ensure that they are covered with at least one inch (1") of saltwater. When sold as dead bait, the shrimp must be packed heads on and frozen in packages that contain no more than one quart of shrimp. The packages must be clearly marked with letters at least one half inch (1/2") in size, to read as follows: "SOLD FOR BAIT ONLY".

No one person may buy more than eight (8) quarts of bait shrimp in any 24 hr period, nor may any licensed bait dealership sell or otherwise distribute to one person, more than 8 quarts of bait shrimp in a 24 hr period. The sale of bait shrimp in excess of this amount by one licensed bait dealer to another licensed bait dealer is allowed, provided DNR has been previously notified of the destination of the shrimp to be sold and the time and approximate amount of such sale, and provided DNR has approved the equipment for transferring such shrimp.

**Requirements:** Bait dealers must keep all shrimp in saltwater tanks meeting the standards described below unless and until the shrimp die, in which case the shrimp must be promptly packaged and frozen as dead bait. No licensed bait dealer may

intentionally cause or allow shrimp to die. The standards for bait dealership facilities are as follows:

(1) Live bait shrimp facilities must be located within the salt waters of the state and must consist of either floating bait containers or tanks with circulating or recirculating systems to provide an exchange of salt waters; (2) Floating bait containers must be affixed to docks or structures attached to high ground above the high water mark and constructed with adequate openings to provide for a steady exchange of salt waters; (3) Tanks with circulating salt water systems must include adequate spray outlets to provide aeration as well as sufficient water inlets to create a circulating flow within the bait tank; (4) All live shrimp-holding facilities must be constructed of nontoxic materials or materials which have been properly treated with an approved nontoxic substance. The facilities must be maintained in a condition conducive to keeping shrimp alive, which requires regular cleaning and the removal of dead shrimp; (5) No organism other than shrimp can be held in live shrimp bait tanks; (6) Freezer storage sufficient to freeze and to keep frozen any shrimp which die while in possession of a dealer and which are to be sold as dead bait must be maintained on the premises of the established bait dealership; (7) The bait dealership and/or docking/unloading area may not in any way be attached to a dock or facility used for the landing and processing of food shrimp.

Any live bait shrimp dealership that is more than ½ mile from public salt water angling access is required to maintain access to customers. Customers must be able to reach the dealership during all tide stages via a public launching facility, public fishing dock or platform or other forms of saltwater access during all tidal stages. Access by vehicle, as well as public parking, is also required at all times.

Any live bait dealership that derives a minimum of \$5,000 of earned income from the sale of recreational fishing supplies and accessories associated with saltwater angling is exempt from having to be within ½ mile of saltwater. In order to claim this

exemption, a dealer must provide as evidence any records required by the DNR. All other requirements are in effect.

A bait dealer must permit inspection of the bait dealership by employees of DNR at any reasonable time. Failure to comply with this requirement is unlawful and grounds for forfeiture of the bait shrimping bond and license revocation.

It is unlawful to sell, unload, or otherwise dispose of shrimp taken for a bait dealership at any place other than the bait dealership for which the bait was taken. The only two exceptions are: (1) the transfer from a licensed bait boat to a DNR-approved vehicle (with such equipment to keep the shrimp alive) which will unload the shrimp at a bait dealership which is not located on the waterfront; and (2) the transfer of bait shrimp from one licensed bait dealer to another licensed bait dealer when DNR has been previously notified of the destination of the shrimp to be sold and the time and approximate amount of such sale, and provided DNR has approved the equipment for transferring such shrimp. In each case, the 50-quart maximum applies.

Bait shrimp may never be sold or disposed of for human consumption. No one may possess bait shrimp intended for sale or distribution for human consumption. No bait dealer or employee of a dealer may have or allow in or on the commercial fishing boat used for bait shrimping, or in or on the bait dealership premises, any shrimp to be used for human consumption.

**Areas, Seasons and Hours:** All bait shrimp trawling is restricted to designated "Bait Zone" areas. Maps of the bait zones are available from CRD office in Brunswick, and the Demeries Creek office in Richmond Hill. These areas may be opened and closed at the discretion of the DNR Commissioner based on sound biological, environmental, economic and social criteria set forth in state law. The lawful hours for commercial bait shrimping (taking shrimp for sale as bait) are from one-half hour before official sunrise to one-half hour after official sunset.



**Catch and Possession Limit:** 50 quarts of shrimp is the maximum amount allowed for any commercial bait dealer to have on board the bait shrimping vessel. No more than 10% of those may be dead. No licensed bait dealership may have more than 200 quarts of live shrimp at any one time. No more than 10% may be dead, unless the excess dead shrimp are promptly packaged and properly frozen and labeled as "dead bait". Possession of more than 20 quarts of unlabeled, unpacked, or unfrozen heads-on shrimp is prima-facie evidence that the shrimp are to be used for human consumption.

**Bait Trawl Boats:** Established bait dealers may not operate more than one boat at a time in the taking of bait shrimp. The boat must have similar facilities as those mentioned on page 13 for shore facilities in order to keep bait shrimp alive.

Equipment (including the boat) used for obtaining bait shrimp may not be used for any other commercial fishing purpose.

**Identification Boards:** Each person taking bait shrimp for commercial purposes will be required to display an identification board on the bow or cabin of the boat (pg. 3).

**Bait Net Size:** A power-drawn net used for commercial bait shrimping may not be larger than twenty feet (20') at the widest part of its mouth. A twenty-foot net means a trawl with a cork line not to exceed 20 feet from tie-to-tie between the first and last mesh across the mouth of the net. The lead line may not exceed 25 feet from tie-to-tie between the first and last mesh across the mouth of the net, and leg lines of equal length. No webbing shall extend toward the doors beyond the original brail lines that run vertically between the first ties at each end of the cork line and the lead line. Mesh size must be between 1" and 1 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub> " stretch. A TED is not required due to the fact that a bait trawler cannot trawl for food shrimp. BRDs are not required due to the short tow times required to keep shrimp alive.

**Records and Reporting:** The bait dealer must maintain a daily record book showing, for each transaction, the amount of bait

shrimp purchased, the person from whom it was purchased, and the date of the purchase, as well as the amount of live shrimp sold daily. The reports must include all transactions between licensed bait dealers, including the name of any dealership also acting as the seller in the transaction. These records must be submitted to CRD, Brunswick, Georgia by the 5th day of the following month. CRD will provide forms for reporting.

## **CASTNETS**

**Commercial Castnet Licenses:** (O.C.G.A. 27-4-205, 27-4-206 Board Rule 391-2-4-.10) The commercial food shrimp castnet fishery is regulated through a controlled access system. Only 200 licenses may be issued each year. A commercial castnetting license is required for anyone wishing to sell castnet caught shrimp. Castnet licenses must be renewed each year, or the license will revert to the Department whereby it will be re-issued by lottery. To enter the lottery, an application must be filled out at the Brunswick license office between April 1 and June 1 each year. Notification of the lottery will be sent to the local media. The cost of a commercial castnetting license is \$250.00 for a resident and \$2,500.00 for non-residents. In addition, a non-trawler boat license is required (pg. 3). The license may not be transferred or sold. Harvester/dealer reporting is required (pg. 3).

**Areas, Seasons, and Times:** (O.C.G.A. 27-4-133) The Commissioner is authorized to establish a food shrimp castnetting season between May 15th and the end of February (typically the same times that food shrimp trawling is open). During this open season all saltwaters are open at all hours to castnetting for shrimp.

**Castnet Construction:** (O.C.G.A. 27-1-2-13.1, 27-4-13). The maximum radius allowed is 12 feet. All castnets used for taking shrimp must be constructed of a uniform mesh size and a uniform mesh material from the thimble (horn) to the lead line. The lead line must consist of a round line to which is attached a minimum of three-fourths pound of lead per radius foot. Brail or

tuck lines must be of uniform diameter and constructed of the same material as the mesh webbing. Commercial castnets must be constructed of a minimum of five-eighths inch ( $\frac{5}{8}$ " ) bar mesh webbing. **Net modifications, including duct tape and lawn chair webbing, are prohibited.**

**Commercial Castnet Catch Limits:** (O.C.G.A. 27-4-132.1). 60 quarts of heads on shrimp or 38 quarts of shrimp tails per day is the maximum amount of shrimp allowable, no matter how many licensed commercial castnetters are on a boat. This limit applies even to shrimp taken with a combination of a castnet and seine.

**Baiting Shrimp:** It is against the law to place, deposit, distribute or scatter any bait of any kind in, on, or over any waters in order to lure, attract, or entice shrimp toward the bait or to cause shrimp to congregate in the area where bait is placed. It is also illegal to knowingly fish for shrimp in baited waters.

## **SEINES**

**Licenses:** A commercial fishing license is required to use a seine for commercial purposes (pg. 2). If using a boat, a commercial non-trawler boat license is also required (pg. 3). Harvester/dealer reporting is required (pg. 3).

**Catch Limits and Seasons:** When food shrimping with a seine, no one person, whether alone or in a group, may possess more than 24 quarts of shrimp with heads on or 15 quarts of tails in any 24 hour period. If any person or group of persons occupying the same boat is in possession of a cast net and a seine, such person or persons shall be subject to the limits imposed for shrimp taken by cast net (pg. 17).

The food shrimping season for seines is the same as the season for trawls and castnets. The Commissioner can open the season from May 15 through the end of February (pg. 17).

**12 feet:** Seines twelve feet (12 ft) in length or less, with a maximum depth of four feet (4 ft), and maximum stretch mesh of one inch (1"), may be used at any time in salt waters.

**< 100 feet:** Seines less than one hundred feet (100 ft) in length, with a minimum stretched mesh size of one and one-fourth inches ( $1 \frac{1}{4}$ " ), may be used on any sand beach on any barrier island of this state. However, the use of seines over 12 feet in any inlet or tidal slough is prohibited.

**300 feet:** Seines from one hundred feet (100 ft) to three hundred feet (300 ft) in length may be used only on the oceanfront sides of beaches. These seines must have minimum stretch mesh size of two and one-half inches ( $2 \frac{1}{2}$  "). **Seines over three hundred feet (300 ft) in length are prohibited.**

**Other:** A seine used in salt waters may not block more than one-half of the entrance of any tidal river, creek, slough, or inlet to the ocean. A seine may not be used as a gill net. A gill net is a net that is fished in a stationary manner to ensnare or entangle the fish in the meshes. Gill nets are prohibited in Georgia saltwaters, except for commercial fishing for shad.

## **CRABS**

**Commercial Crabbing Licenses:** The commercial blue crab fishery is regulated through a controlled access system. Only 159 licenses may be issued each year. A commercial crabbing license is required for anyone fishing more than 6 traps. Crab licenses must be renewed by May 1<sup>st</sup> each year or the license will revert to the Department whereby it will be re-issued by lottery. To enter the lottery, an application must be filled out at the Brunswick license office between April 1 and June 1 each year. Notification of the lottery will be sent to the local media.

An individual may also obtain a license by purchasing a licensed crabbing boat. The license may not be sold but may be transferred with the boat. However, the transfer must be registered with the Department within 30 days in order to be valid. The buyer must renew the license along with the applicable trap permits and boat license. The cost of a commercial crabbing license is \$12.00 for a resident and \$118.00 non-resident. In addition, a non-trawler boat license is required (pg. 3) as well as trap permits discussed below. Harvester/dealer reporting is required (pg. 3).

**Commercial Trap Limits:** There is a maximum limit of 200 crab traps that a commercial crabber can employ. Each commercial crabber must purchase commercial crab trap permits at a **fee of \$2.00 per trap**. Permits are issued in 50 trap increments at the time of purchase of the commercial crabbing license. This is the only time permits are sold. Individual permit quantities cannot be revised during a license year. There are harsh fines for persons who exceed the trap permit limit.

**Commercial Crab Trap Construction:** A commercial crab trap is an oblong cage or cubicle structure constructed of wooden slats, hardware cloth, chicken wire or other similar material with one or more tunnel-shaped entrances that limit exit. **Two "Escape Rings"** must be installed on any of the four vertical, outside walls. The ring is a rigid, circular port forming the boundary of an opening and is placed flush with an outside

surface of the crab trap in order to create an unobstructed opening through the wall of the trap. Each ring must measure at least  $2 \frac{3}{8}$  inches inside diameter. Escape rings may not be placed in the floor or ceiling of the trap.

Overboard disposal of crab traps is a violation of both state and federal law. The department has implemented a crab trap recycling program in cooperation with the crabbing industry. For more information contact CRD 912-264-7218.

**Size and Catch Limits:** Crabs measuring five inches (5") or more from spike to spike across the back are allowed to be harvested. Peelers that measure three inches (3") from spike to spike across the back as well as mature adult female crabs of any size may also be harvested. There are no quotas or quantity limits on the harvest of crabs taken commercially.

**Sponge Crab Harvest Is Prohibited:** The harvest and possession of any egg bearing female blue crab (sponge crab) is prohibited. When harvested during legal crabbing operations, the sponge crab must be immediately culled and returned to the water alive and unharmed. It is also unlawful to harm, molest, or remove the egg mass from the female crab. This change does not prohibit an individual from possessing and selling sponge crabs that were legally harvested from another state so long as proper documentation such as a purchase invoice that demonstrates the point of origin is provided to the conservation ranger. The new law is necessary in order to protect the spawning female during current decreased population levels. If populations are determined to have rebounded, the law will sunset on July 1, 2005.

**Soft-Shell Crabs:** Soft-shelled crabs may only be sold to licensed soft-shell crab dealers. No one other than a licensed commercial crab fisherman or a licensed soft-shell crab dealer may possess peeler crabs in commercial quantities (a bushel or more). Only a licensed soft-shell crab dealer may operate a shedding facility. Soft-shell crab dealers may purchase peeler crabs only from licensed commercial crab fisherman or another

soft-shell dealer, or from anyone outside of this state, with appropriate documentation.

**Peeler Trap Ring Exemption:** In addition to crab trap specifications list above, a "commercial peeler crab trap" deployed for taking "peeler crabs," whether for sale or not, must be constructed with a minimum one inch (1") mesh size. Its maximum dimensions are 24" x 24" x 24". Peeler traps can only be baited with live, legal-sized, male blue crab and are exempt from the escape ring requirement. Other baits, including fish or other organisms, may not be used for peeler traps and if used, is prima-facie evidence of a violation of the rule.

**Areas, Seasons and Hours:** Commercial crab traps may be placed in waters described as "salt waters" in the Saltwater Demarcation Line Section (pg. 4) and in the portion of the St. Marys River and the Satilla River System (including the Satilla River and White Oak Creek) seaward of the Seaboard Coastline Railroad and in that portion of the Altamaha River System which is seaward of I-95. Commercial crab traps may not be placed within 100 feet of a dock of another person. Also, crab traps may not be placed or set in a legally marked channel. In Georgia, it is legal to use crab traps year-round at any time of day.

**Trap Floats and Identification:** All commercial crab traps must have a float attached that is visible from a distance of 100 feet in clear weather at slack tide. Each float must be marked with the identification number assigned by the department. Markings must be at least one inch (1") in height, of contrasting color to the float, and readable from left to right. **This same identification number must also appear on the boat working the traps.** The number must be placed on each side, on the forward one-third of the boat. The characters must be in block form, at least eight inches (8") in height, and must be of contrasting color to the background and must be readable from left to right. A crabbing boat may only have one identification number. However, alternate boats may be issued the same identification as long as only one of the boats is operated at any

one time. Commercial traps without the required identification issued by the Department will be seized as contraband. Harvesters must give the Department written notice via fax or mail when they have given someone permission to work their traps. The person given permission must have that permission in writing and on his person as well as a personal commercial fishing license. A licensed crabber working the traps of another person by permission may not work the traps of any other person, including their own traps, at the same time.

It is unlawful to take crabs from a commercial trap or to intentionally damage, destroy or remove any such crab trap or float of another commercial crabber.

**Crab Harvester Reporting:** All commercial crabbers must maintain a record book showing the name and address of the person or persons to whom crabs are sold; and such other information as may be required by the DNR. Persons failing to report crab harvest will be subject to penalties specified in law.

All commercial crabbers must submit harvest records directly to the Department. To assist the industry in meeting this requirement, the DNR will provide daily harvest tickets that can be obtained at the Brunswick and Demeris Creek License Offices. Reports for the previous month's harvest are due to the Department by the 10th day of the following month.

## **Crab and Whelk Trawling**

**Licenses:** Each person engaged in commercial trawling for crab and whelk is required to have a commercial fishing license (pg. 2). A commercial trawler boat license (pg. 2) is also needed before fishing with power drawn nets in Georgia waters. Each commercial trawler must also display an identification board (pg. 3). Harvester/dealer reporting is required (pg. 3).

**Areas and Seasons:** The DNR Commissioner may open and close any of the State's waters on the seaward side of the sounds at any time of the year to crab and whelk trawling.

Additionally, the Commissioner may open and close the waters of Cumberland, St. Simons, Sapelo, St. Andrew, Wassaw or Ossabaw sounds to crab and whelk trawling during the months of January, February and March.

Power-drawn nets may be used to take crabs and whelks between the hours of 5 a.m. and 8 p.m. When the sounds are open to trawling for crab and whelk, power-drawn nets may only be used from 5 a.m. Monday morning until 8 p.m. on Saturday afternoon.

**Net Sizes:** A power-drawn net used for taking crabs and whelks must be of at least four-inch (4") stretch mesh webbing. Possession of any net with mesh smaller than 4 inches (4") while waters are open specifically for the taking of crabs and whelks shall be prima facie evidence of a violation of Georgia Law, Code Section 27-4-133 (f).

**Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs):** Commercial crab and whelk trawlers must have a certified turtle excluder device (TED) in each net. As of the 2001 season, there are three TED models certified by the Department for use in Georgia waters for crab and whelk trawling. These are the N.C. Flounder TED and two modified versions of the N.C. Flounder TED. Contact DNR for information on crab/whelk TED specifications.

**Note:** There is no minimum size for whelks. BRDs are not required in crab and whelk trawls.

## **BAIT MINNOW TRAPPING**

**Definition:** "Bait Minnow" means any member of the family Cyprinodontidae, including but not limited to mummichog killifishes, commonly known as mud minnows.

**Licenses:** Commercial fishing for "Bait Minnows" in Georgia's saltwaters requires a commercial fishing license (pg. 2), a commercial bait dealer license (pg. 12), and a commercial non-trawler boat license (pg. 3), if a boat is used in the collection of

minnows. Additionally the bait facility must meet the requirements for a live bait shrimp facility (pg. 13). An employee of a licensed bait dealer who possesses a valid personal commercial fishing license may work the bait minnow traps for their employer. Only persons possessing a valid wholesale fish dealer license are allowed to resell commercially harvested bait minnows. Harvester/dealer reporting is required (pg. 3).

**Bait Minnow Traps:** Traps used to harvest bait minnows can be either a rectangular cage constructed of hardware cloth, wire, plastic or similar material with its size not exceeding 24" x 18" x 9", or a cylindrical trap of the same materials with a maximum size of 24" in length and 30" in circumference. The mesh size on all commercial traps cannot be smaller than ½" bar mesh, except for the funnel or muzzle which can not be smaller than ¼" bar mesh. The round throat opening cannot exceed ¾" in diameter. Each trap must have attached a tag or float bearing the name, address, and commercial bait dealer license number of the owner of the trap. No licensed bait dealership may employ more than 10 traps at any given time regardless of the number of employees working those traps.

**Limits:** Fifty (50) quarts of bait minnows is the maximum possession limit for any licensed bait dealer or wholesale fish dealer at any time.

**Mandatory Records:** A licensed bait dealer must maintain a daily record book showing the amount of bait minnows harvested and sold daily. Written reports shall be submitted to the Department no later than the fifth day of the following month in a format established by the department.

## **HORSESHOE CRABS**

**Licenses:** A commercial fishing license (pg. 2) is required in order to harvest horseshoe crab(s) to be used or sold as bait. If a boat is used, a commercial boat license (trawler or non-trawler

depending on gear) is required (pg. 2-3). Harvester/dealer reporting is required (pg. 3).

**Areas and Seasons:** The taking of horseshoe crabs for bait is allowed only when the salt waters of this state are open to the taking of shrimp, whelk, or blue crab by trawling.

**Limits:** No one may possess more than 25 horseshoe crabs at any one time nor may there be more than 75 horseshoe crabs on board a commercial vessel provided there are at least three commercially licensed persons onboard. Horseshoe crabs taken incidentally during legal fishing operations for other marine species may be on board a vessel provided that horseshoe crabs in excess of the above limits are immediately returned to the water without being intentionally or negligently harmed by the harvester or the equipment being used.

**Biomedical Permits:** The Department may issue a Medical Takings Permit allowing the harvest of horseshoe crabs in excess of the limit when used for the production of Limulus Amebocyte Lysate (LAL). Horseshoe crabs taken and possessed for biomedical use must be returned alive to state waters of comparable salinity and water quality as soon as is feasible after collection of their blood. Contact CRD in Brunswick (912-264-7218) for information on Medical Taking Permits.

**Other:** The interstate import of horseshoe crabs is legal provided that a bona fide bill of lading accompanies the crabs as proof that they were not taken or transported in violation of this law or the laws of the jurisdiction from which the horseshoe crabs originated.

## **EEL**

**Licenses:** Commercial fishing for adult eels in the salt waters of Georgia requires a commercial fishing license (pg. 2). An adult eel is defined as an eel at least 6 inches in length. If a boat is

used, a commercial non-trawler boat license is required (pg. 3). Harvester/dealer reporting is required (pg. 3).

**Areas:** It is legal to fish commercially for adult eels in all saltwaters open to commercial catfishing and crabbing and in the following DNR designated areas:

- In Savannah River from the saltwater demarcation line to a point one-half mile below the Stevens Creek Reservoir Dam;
- In the Ogeechee River from the saltwater demarcation line to the U. S. Highway 25 bridge at Millen;
- In the Altamaha River from the saltwater demarcation line to the confluence of the Oconee and Ocmulgee rivers;
- In the Oconee River from the confluence of the Oconee and Ocmulgee rivers to a point one-half mile below Lake Sinclair Dam;
- In the Ocmulgee River from the confluence of the Oconee and Ocmulgee rivers to a point one-half mile below Juliette Dam;
- In the Satilla River from the saltwater demarcation line to the U. S. Highway 84 bridge at Waycross;
- In the St. Marys River from the saltwater demarcation line to the Georgia Highway 94 bridge near St. George.

**Legal Equipment:** Legal traps for adult eels are rectangular traps no larger than 24" X 24" X 15 " and cylindrical traps no larger than 15" nor smaller than 9" in diameter, and no greater than 36" in length. Each type of gear must have:

1. A mesh size no smaller than 1 ½", except for the throat or muzzle and the end opposite the throat or muzzle of cylindrical traps.
2. A round opening, the size of which shall be limited by a 2" diameter steel ring securely attached to the material of which the muzzle or throat is constructed.
3. An attached tag bearing the name, address and commercial fishing license number of the person using such pot or trap.

**Restrictions:** All fish other than adult eels, caught in any trap set for eels must be returned to the water immediately at the place the trap has been fished.

## **SHAD**

**Licenses:** A commercial fishing license (pg. 2) is required by anyone fishing commercially for shad. If a boat is used in salt water, a commercial non-trawler boat license is required (pg. 3). Harvester/dealer reporting is required (pg. 3).

**Areas and Seasons:** Shad season is open January 1 through March 31 each year with the DNR Commissioner able to extend the season up to 30 days beyond March 31 based on criteria set forth in state law. The season is closed May 1 through December 31.

- The Altamaha, Satilla, and St. Marys River systems downstream from Seaboard Coastline Railroad bridges (at Altamaha Park on the Altamaha River) will be open to commercial shad fishing Monday through Friday each week. Upstream of these points, waters will be open Tuesday through Saturday each week.
- The Savannah River system downstream from I-95 bridge will be open to commercial shad fishing Tuesday through Friday each week. Upstream of the I-95 bridge will be open Wednesday through Saturday.
- The Ogeechee River system will be open to commercial shad fishing Friday and Saturday on both the upper and lower reaches of the river.
- Tributaries of each river system open to commercial shad fishing are specified in DNR Rule 391-2-4.02 and are presented below.

Waters open to shad fishing:

- Waters of the Savannah River system open to commercial shad fishing are the Savannah River downstream from the mouth of Spirit Creek, Brier Creek, upstream to U.S. Highway 301 bridge, Collis Creek, Albercorn Creek, Front

River, Middle River, Steamboat River, McCoy's Cut, Hometown Cut, Back River upstream from Corps of Engineers New Savannah Cut, New Savannah Cut, North Channel Savannah River downstream to a line running due south of the easternmost tip of Oyster Bed Island, South Channel Savannah River downstream to a line running from the southeast tip of Cockspur Island to the mouth of Lazaretto Creek, and Elba Island Cut between North and South Channels of the Savannah River.

- Waters of the Ogeechee River system open to commercial shad fishing are the Ogeechee River downstream from Georgia Highway 78 bridge, Hell's Gate cut, Ossabaw Sound upstream from the sound/beach boundary (see Rule 391-2-4-.03) to a line running from the northwest tip of Raccoon Key across buoy R "86" to the southernmost tip of marsh adjacent to Green Island, and the South Channel of the Ogeechee River seaward from the sound/beach boundary to an imaginary line through the points located at 31° 47' 27" N. Lat. / 80° 58' 47" W. Long and 31°47'17" N. Lat. / 80° 58' 47" W. Long.
- Waters of the Altamaha River system open to commercial shad fishing are the Ocmulgee River downstream from U.S. Highway 341 bridge at Hawkinsville including Poor Robins Spring, Adams Lake, Brown Lake, Rhodes Lake, Spring Lake and House Creek Lake; the Oconee River downstream from U.S. Highway 80; the Ochoopee River upstream to the U.S. Highway 1 bridge; and the Altamaha River including Cobb Creek Oxbow, Beards Creek from its mouth upstream to the Long-Tatnall County line (Big Lake), Sturgeon Hole from the Altamaha River to the lower mouth of Harper Slough, Old Woman's Pocket, South Branch, General's Cut, South Altamaha River, Champney River, Butler River, One Mile Cut, Wood Cut, Darien River upstream to the confluence Darien Creek and Cathead Creek, Buttermilk Sound upstream to the mouth of Hampton River, Hampton River, Altamaha sound to the sound/beach boundary (see Rule 391-2-4-.03), main channel of Altamaha River seaward

from the sound/beach boundary to an imaginary line through the points located at 31° 18' 15" N. Lat. / 81° 14' 0" W. Long. and 31° 18' 15" N. Lat. / 81° 14' 0" W. Long., Rockdedundy River, Little Mud River, South River, Back River, North River upstream to Hird Island Creek and Doboy Sound from the sound/beach boundary upstream to a line from range F<sub>1</sub> R<sub>4</sub> sec A across buoy R "178" to Sapelo Island. Old River and Mid Slough of the Penholoway River and Ellis Creek are closed to commercial shad fishing.

- Waters of the Satilla River system open to commercial shad fishing are the Satilla River downstream from Georgia Highway 121 bridge to the Alternate Intercoastal Waterway demarcated by buoys A "13" to A "14" to A "15", and White Oak Creek.
- Waters of the St. Marys River System open to commercial shad fishing are the St. Marys River downstream from the boat ramp at Trader's Hill to a line running from the mouth of Point Peter Creek 135 degrees to the Georgia/Florida line.

**Legal Equipment:** Set nets and drift nets of at least 4 1/2 inch stretch mesh or trot lines (in accordance with O.C.G.A. 27-4-91) may be used to fish commercially for shad. Nets may only be set or fished in flowing water within the banks of a stream channel. Nets may not be used in non-flowing waters such as sloughs or dead oxbow lakes.

ONLY DRIFT NETS may be used in the Savannah River system down-stream of a line between the mouth of Knoxboro Creek and McCoys Cut at Deadman's Point; Ossabaw Sound and the offshore waters of the south channel of the Ogeechee River; Altamaha Sound and the offshore waters at the main channel of the Altamaha River; and Doboy Sound.

Set nets must be placed at least 600 feet apart and are limited to 100 feet in length. Set nets must have one end of mesh or webbing of the net secured to the stream's bank and be buoyed at the outer (streamward) end so as to be clearly visible to



boaters. Drift nets shall not be fished closer than 300 feet apart and are limited to a maximum of 1,000 feet in length in saltwaters. Set and drift nets must be situated so as to allow one-half the stream width to be open and free for the passage of fish. All shad nets must have a permanent tag showing the commercial fisherman's name, address and commercial fishing license number.

**Other Restrictions:** Sturgeon, gamefish other than American shad and hickory shad, and all species of catfish taken in shad nets must be immediately released unharmed into the waters from which they were taken.

## **CATFISH FISHING**

**Licenses:** Commercial fishing for catfish in the saltwaters of this state requires a commercial fishing license (pg. 2) and, if a boat is used, a commercial non-trawler boat license (pg. 3). Harvester/dealer reporting is required (pg. 3).

**Size Limit:** When landed whole, catfish must be at least 9" in length. When the head is removed, the body must be at least 7" in length. When the head and tail are removed, the body must be at least 6" in length.

**Legal Equipment:** Legal equipment for commercial catfishing is limited to:

1. trot lines; and
2. one-inch mesh wire baskets less than 72 inches in length or 60 inches in circumference and which have two throats (one at the extreme front and the second 17 inches behind the first with a 7 1/2 square inch trap door); and
3. hoop nets (minimum stretch mesh of 2 inches) that do not exceed 3 1/2 feet in diameter or 10 feet in length.

All such equipment must have permanent tags showing the commercial fisherman's name, address and commercial license number.

**Areas:** Commercial fishing for catfish in salt waters is allowed in areas east of the official demarcation line separating fresh and salt waters (pg. ), with the exception of the north branch of the Altamaha River, where commercial catfishing is legal downstream from the mouth of Lewis Creek, and in the south branch of the Altamaha River where commercial catfishing is legal downstream from the uppermost entrance to Hammersmith Creek.

## **GIGGING**

Only flounder may be taken with a gig in the salt waters of Georgia. Anyone commercially gigging for flounder must purchase a commercial fishing license (pg. 2). If using a boat, a non-trawler boat license is required (pg. 3). Harvester/dealer reporting is required (pg. 3).

## **CLAMS AND OYSTERS**

**Licenses and Permits:** A commercial fishing license (pg. 2) is required for anyone taking or possessing oysters or clams commercially or taking or possessing in excess of two bushels of oysters or one bushel of clams per day. If a boat is used, a commercial non-trawler boat license (pg. 3) is required. Also required is a master collecting permit that is issued annually by DNR at no cost to the person having the exclusive harvesting rights or to his or her lessee. Harvester/dealer reporting is required (pg. 3).

A master collecting permit is not required for employees of permit holders if the employees have: (1) a valid commercial fishing license; (2) a valid commercial fishing boat license if a boat is used; and (3) a picker's permit as provided by the DNR indicating the exact area and circumstances allowed for taking shellfish.

A master collecting permittee may request authorization from the DNR for employees or agents, who shall be referred to as pickers, to harvest shellfish from permitted areas. Such requests shall be in writing to the DNR (One Conservation Way, Suite 300, Brunswick, GA, 31520-8687) and shall include the name, address and commercial fishing license number of the picker. Pickers must attend a shellfish health and safety seminar presented by DNR before permits are issued. A master collecting permittee must report to DNR the volume and location of oysters and/or clams harvested during the previous season. A master collecting permit will not be issued if the permittee failed to comply with Code Section 27-4-196 (See Distribution of Oyster Shells) during the previous season or if the issuance of the permit is determined not to be in accordance with sound, current principles of wildlife research and management by DNR.

Master collecting permits and pickers' permits will not be issued to persons who have been convicted three times of violations of State shellfish laws of public health significance in the last two years immediately preceding the filing of an application for a permit. Master collecting permits and pickers' permits issued to master collecting permittee's agents must be surrendered to the DNR upon termination of Department of Agriculture certification for handling shellfish, upon termination of right to harvest shellfish, or upon violation of any State law pertaining to shellfish. If a picker is removed from authorization to take shellfish by the master collecting permittee, that picker must immediately surrender to the DNR his or her picker's permit. It is unlawful to possess unauthorized pickers' permits or pickers' permits issued to another person.

A proprietor may not build or operate a facility for the controlled purification of shellfish without prior written approval from DNR.

**Areas, Seasons and Hours:** Saltwaters may be opened for the taking of oysters or clams between January 1 and December 31 at the discretion of the Commissioner if it is determined that the opening is in accordance with current, sound wildlife management principles. Notice of such openings will be posted

in the same manner as set forth in Commercial Food Shrimping: Areas and Season (pg. 9). It is unlawful to give permission to take oysters or clams from a closed area.

**It is unlawful to take any quantity of shellfish for commercial purposes from public recreational harvest areas.**

Legal shellfish harvest hours are between one-half hour before sunrise and one-half hour after sunset.

**Size and Catch Limits:** An oyster which measures less than 3 inches from hinge to mouth may not be taken, unless it is attached to an oyster 3 inches or larger and cannot be removed from the larger oyster without destroying it. It is illegal for any person engaged in shucking or canning oysters for market to shuck, can, purchase or have in possession more than 5% of oysters which are less than 3 inches. It is illegal to take or possess any clam which measures less than three-fourths inch ( $\frac{3}{4}$ " ) thickness (maximum depth from one shell half to the other).

**Methods of Harvesting:** Harvest by hand or by hand-held implements is the only legally approved method unless otherwise specifically authorized in writing by DNR. In order to use any other equipment, the person responsible for the on-site operation of such equipment must have DNR's written permission on his person and all the conditions of that permission must be met.

**Distribution of Oyster Shells:** Any permitted commercial oyster harvester gathering oysters from beds other than those leased by the state must do one of the following each year:

- 1) Distribute on areas designated by DNR at least 33 1/3 % (by volume) of the oyster shell taken by the permittee or taken under authorization of the permittee during the immediately preceding harvest season; or
- 2) Distribute or transplant as least as much culch material by volume.

Culch material means any approved material which is conducive to larval oyster attachment, such as: oyster shells; clam shells; scrub oak brush; cement coated shingles; aggregate lime rock two inches or less in diameter; non-galvanized wire fencing; and other similar material.

Such shell deposition, oyster transplanting, or deposition of culch material must be done under the direction or supervision of DNR and requires prior notification to the Department.

Oyster shells taken from beds leased from the state remain the property of the state. It shall be unlawful for any person taking oysters from state beds to fail to return the shells to the same beds in the amounts as are specified in the lease agreement.

## SEA TURTLES

It is unlawful for any person to sell or offer for sale any sea turtles or to offer for sale, sell, or destroy any sea turtle eggs. **Sea turtles are protected by the Federal Endangered Species Act as well as State Rules.** It is unlawful to possess sea turtle parts without appropriate permits.

## MARINE MAMMALS

It is unlawful for any person to net, trap, harpoon, molest, display, feed or otherwise interfere with the well being or normal activity of marine mammals including bottlenose & spotted dolphin, manatee, and any species of whale. **The Federal Marine Mammal Protection Act protects marine mammals.** It is also unlawful to possess marine mammal parts without appropriate permits. **Report sightings of dead or injured marine mammals to: 1-800-241-4113.**

## FINFISH HARVEST REGULATIONS

Species	Open Season	Daily Creel Limit	Possession Limit	Minimum Size Limit
Amberjack (No Sale 4/1 – 4/30)	3/16 – 12/31	1	1	28" FL
Atlantic Croaker	All Year	No Commercial Limit		8" TL
Atlantic Sturgeon	No Harvest			
Billfish (blue& white marlin, sailfish)	CATCH AND RELEASE ONLY			
Black Drum	All Year	15	15	10" TL
Black Sea Bass	All Year	20	20	10" TL
Bluefish	3/16 – 11/30	15	15	12" FL
Cobia	3/16-11/30	2	2	33" FL
Dolphin	All Year	10	10	20" FL
	Not to exceed 60 per boat, except for headboats, which are allowed 10 per paying customer.			
Flounder	All Year	15	15	12" TL
Gag Grouper (No Sale 3/1 – 4/30)	All Year	2	2	24" TL
King Mackerel	All Year	3	3	24" FL
Red Drum	All Year	5	5	14" TL min - 23" TL
Red Porgy (No Sale 1/1 – 4/30)	All Year	1	1	14" TL
Red Snapper	All Year	2	2	20" TL
Sheepshead	All Year	15	15	10" FL
Spanish Mackerel	3/16 – 11/30	15	15	12" FL
Spot	All Year	No Commercial Limit		8" TL
Spotted Seatrout	All Year	15	15	13" TL
Striped Bass	All Year	2	2	22" TL
Sand Tiger Shark	No Harvest			
Small Shark Composite	All Year	2	2	30" TL
	Atlantic Sharpnose / Bonnethead / Spiny Dogfish			
Sharks (other than those above)	All Year	2	2	48" TL
	2 per person or boat, whichever is less. Limit may include only one longer than 84".			
Tripletail	All Year	5	5	18" TL
Weakfish	All Year	6	6	13" TL
Whiting	All Year	No Commercial Limit		10" TL
Tarpon	No Sale			
FL = Fork Length	TL = Total Length			

## **Summary of Commercial Shrimp Regulations as of September 2001.**

See pages 9-19 for complete details.

	Food Shrimp Trawls	Bait Shrimp Trawls	Castnets	Seines
Gear	TEDs/BRDs. 220' max foot rope / vessel, excludes trynet.	20' net max 1 - 1 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>8</sub> " mesh size. gear specifics restricted by regulation.	<sup>5</sup> / <sub>8</sub> " min. bar mesh. 12 ft max.	Less than 100 ft. length. 1 ¼ " min stretched mesh.
Season / Hours	State waters can be opened May 15 – Dec 31 (5am – 8pm), extension possible (Jan-Feb); EEZ open year round unless closed due to freeze	Year round, daylight	Same as trawler season. All hours.	Same as food shrimp trawl and castnet season. All hours.
Catch Limit	None	50 qts. "live" per boat (no more than 10% dead); 200 qts. per facility; allows for packaged dead bait	60 qts. per person or boat	24 qts. per person
Area	Sounds Closed; Beaches: count size must be 45/lb. May 15 – Dec. 50/lb. Jan - Feb.	Specified zones, creeks, and rivers only	No closed areas	Any sand beach of any barrier island. Inlets and sloughs closed.
License	Commercial Fishing Trawler Vessel	Commercial Fishing Trawler Vessel	Comm. Castnet (limited entry); Non Trawler Vessel	Commercial Fishing
Bond	Yes, \$5,000	Yes, \$2,000	No	No