

POTOMAC RIVER FISHERIES COMMISSION

2026

SPORT FISHING IN THE TIDAL POTOMAC RIVER LEGAL SIZES, LIMITS AND OTHER RESTRICTIONS

2026

A Sport Fishing License is Required ♦ Any Fish Caught with Hook and Line May Not Be Sold or Offered for Sale (except by commercial license) ♦ Any Fish Whose Size is Prohibited, Season is Closed, or is in Excess of the Possession Limit Must be Immediately Released to the Waters Where Found ♦ No High-Grading Allowed – It is unlawful to return fish to the water after it is placed into a cooler or storage. ♦ No Filleting At-Sea or At-Shore is Allowed, And Possession of Fillets is Prohibited.
All sizes are total length (TL) and all restrictions are subject to change. Rev. 4.17.2026

Striped Bass (Rockfish)

Non-Offset (inline) Circle Hooks are required to be used when fishing for striped bass using cut or whole natural bait. Targeting is defined as "to catch or attempt to catch".

Catch and Release January 1 through May 15 No harvest permitted of any size
Bait Restrictions: No live eel. No more than 2 hooks or set of hooks per rod or line.

Summer/Fall Season
Season Open: May 16 – July 6 and Aug. 21 – Dec. 31
Season Closed: July 7 thru Aug. 20 (No Direct Targeting)
Minimum Size Limit: Minimum 19.0" and Maximum 24.0"
Possession Limit: 1 per person/day
Bait Restrictions: No more than 2 hooks or set of hooks per rod or line.



Black Bass (Largemouth Bass) Season: 15” Mar. 1 – June 15 Minimum Size Limit: 12” all other times Possession Limit: 5 per person		Eel Minimum Size Limit: 9” Possession Limit: 25 per person	
Black Drum Minimum Size Limit: 16” Possession Limit: 1 per person		Pike (Chain Pickerel) Minimum Size Limit: 14” No Possession Limit	
Black Sea Bass Season: May 1 – Dec. 31 Minimum Size Limit: 12.5” Possession Limit: 15 per person Tail filament is not incl. in total length of the fish		Red Drum (Puppy Drum) Minimum Size Limit: 18” Maximum Size Limit: 25” Possession Limit: 5 per person	
Bluefish (Taylor) Jan. 1 – Dec. 31 Minimum Size Limit: 8” Recreational Possession Limit: 5 per person Charter/"For Hire" Possession Limit: 7 per/person		Spanish Mackerel Minimum Size Limit: 14” Possession Limit: 15 per person	
Catfish – Bullhead Minimum Size Limit: 6” No Possession Limit		Spotted Sea Trout Minimum Size Limit: 14” Possession Limit: 10 per person	
Catfish – Blue Season: Year Round No Minimum Size Limit No Possession Limit		Summer Flounder Jan. 1 – May 31 June 1 – Dec. 31 16” min. 17.5” min. 4 per person 4 per person	
Cobia * Season: June 15 – Sept. 20 Minimum Size Limit: 43” Possession: 1/person or 2/vessel		Tautog Minimum Size Limit: 14” No Possession Limit	
Crappie No Minimum Size Limit Possession Limit: 10 per person		Weakfish (Sea Trout) Minimum Size Limit: 12” Possession Limit: 1 per person	
Croaker (Hardhead) Minimum Size Limit: 9” min. Possession Limit: 25 per person		Yellow Perch Minimum Size Limit: 9” Possession Limit: 10 per person	
Snakehead No Minimum Size Limit No Possession Limit Unlawful to possess a live snakehead or to return, release or otherwise discard a living Snakehead.		Spot Possession Limit: 50 per person	
Shad – American Season Closed – Moratorium		Sturgeon Season Closed – Moratorium	
Shad – Hickory Season Closed – Moratorium		River Herring – Moratorium Season Closed	 Blueback  Alewife 

POTOMAC RIVER FISHERIES COMMISSION
SPORT FISHING LICENSE RECIPROCITY GUIDELINES

Licenses That Will Be Accepted

NOTICE – While PRFC fishing licenses are valid in MD & VA areas listed here, the seasons, sizes and creel limits for each species may be different. Check MD & VA rules before fishing.

Bodies of Water	Virginia		PRFC Sport Fishing License	Maryland	
	Fresh Water	Salt Water		Bay Sport	Non Tidal
Potomac River (Tidal) Waters of the District of Columbia (DC license required)	No	No	No	No	No
Main stem of the Potomac River above Rt. 301 bridge	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Main stem of the Potomac River below Rt. 301 bridge	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
MD tributaries above Rt. 301 bridge up to demarcation lines (<i>listed below</i>)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
MD tributaries below Rt. 301 bridge up to demarcation lines (<i>listed below</i>)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
MD tributaries upstream of demarcation lines (<i>listed below</i>)	No	No	No	No	Yes
VA tributaries above Rt. 301 bridge up to demarcation lines (<i>listed below</i>)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
VA tributaries below Rt. 301 bridge	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
VA tributaries upstream of demarcation lines (<i>listed below</i>)	Yes	No	No	No	No
Chesapeake Bay MD portion of Chesapeake Bay and its other tidal tributaries	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
VA portion of Chesapeake Bay and its saltwater tributaries	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Patuxent River Above MD Rt. 214 bridge	No	No	No	No	Yes
Below MD Rt. 214 bridge	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Rappahannock River Above Rt. 360 bridge	Yes	No	No	No	No
Main stem below Rt. 360 bridge	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Tributaries below/downstream of Rt. 360 bridge	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Virginia Ocean – Including ocean tributaries	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Demarcation Lines (Boundary Lines) between Tidal and Non-Tidal or Saltwater and Freshwater

Maryland Tidal waters of the Potomac River tributaries between the border with District of Columbia along its southeast quadrant line and the Chesapeake Bay are downstream of the highway bridges of the following: Breton Bay - MD Rt. 243; Henson Run - Oxon Hill Rd.; Mattawoman Creek - MD Rt. 225; Nanjemoy Creek - Trappe Bridge on MD Rt. 6; Piscataway Creek - MD Rt. 224 (Livingston Rd.); Port Tobacco Creek - MD Rt. 6; St. Clements Bay - MD Rt. 234; St. Mary's River - MD Rt. 5, (Great Mills Rd.); Wicomico River - MD Rt. 234; Other tidal bays and tributaries thereof.	Virginia Virginia waters between the District of Columbia and Rt. 301 bridge downstream of the following: Accotink Creek - Rt. 1 bridge; Aquia Creek - 1st bridge above Aquia Harbor Marina; Chopawamsic - Rt. 1 bridge; Choptank - Causeway; Dogue Creek - Rt. 235, Mt. Vernon Memorial Parkway; Four Mile Run - Rt. 1 bridge; Hunting Creek - Rt. 1 bridge; Little Hunting Creek - Rt. 1 bridge; Neabsco - Rt. 1 bridge; Occoquan River - fall line; Pohick Creek - Rt. 611 (Colchester Rd.); Potomac Creek - Rt. 608 bridge; Powells Creek - Rt. 1 bridge; Quantico Creek Rt. 1 bridge; Unnamed bays & tributaries accessible by gas powered boats.
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