

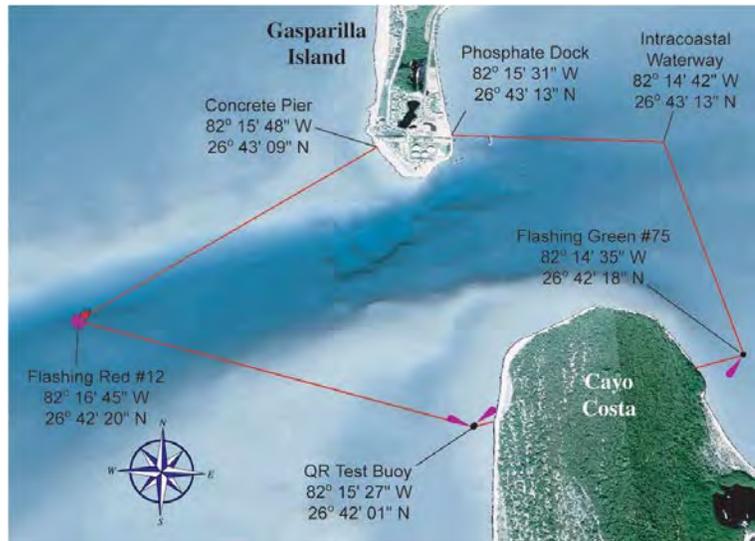
Frequently Asked Questions: 2014 Recreational Tarpon and Boca Grande Gear changes



What are the new regulations for tarpon?

Effective Sept. 1, 2013, the FWC made tarpon catch-and-release only. In addition, the following new regulations (FAC 68B-4.018 and 68B-32) also apply when fishing for tarpon:

- Gear used for tarpon is limited to hook-and-line only.
- Tarpon is a catch-and-release-only species, with the exception of the harvest or possession of a single tarpon when in pursuit of an IGFA record and in conjunction with a tarpon tag.
- Tarpon tags are limited to one per person, per year (except for charter boat captains).
- Transport or shipment of tarpon harvested with a tag is limited to one fish per person.
- One fish per vessel limit is created for tarpon harvested with a tag.
- People are allowed to temporarily possess a tarpon for photography, measurement of length and girth and scientific sampling, with the stipulation that tarpon more than 40 inches must remain in the water.
- Tarpon regulations extend into federal waters.
- Tarpon tag cost remains \$50 per tag but tag validity will change from a July through June time frame to a January through December time frame. Tags purchased from July 1 through Dec. 31, 2013, are good through Dec. 31, 2014.
- The use of multiple hooks is prohibited in conjunction with live or dead natural bait to harvest or attempt to harvest tarpon.



What is the new tarpon snagging definition and what are the new gear regulations for fishing in Boca Grande Pass?

The FWC Commission approved a two-part proposal that adds language to the current statewide snagging definition for tarpon (68B-32) and modifies what types of gear can be used when fishing in Boca Grande Pass (68B-4.018).

These changes went into effect Nov. 1, 2013, and include:

- Adding language to the snagging definition to prohibit catching or attempting to catch tarpon that have not been attracted or enticed to strike an angler's gear. This change will apply to tarpon fishing statewide.
- Prohibiting fishing with gear that has a weight attached to a hook, artificial fly or lure in such a way that the weight hangs lower than the hook when the line or leader is suspended vertically from the rod.
 - **Live or dead natural bait is not considered to be a weight.**

- Anything other than live or dead natural bait that is attached directly to the hook in such a way that it hangs lower than the hook could be considered weight.
- This change will apply to fishing for all species year-round within Boca Grande Pass. If this gear is on board a fishing vessel while inside the boundaries of the Pass, it cannot be attached to any rod, line or leader and must be stowed.

Which rigs are prohibited?

When fishing for tarpon, gear is limited to hook and line only and you cannot use multiple hooks in conjunction with live or dead natural bait. When fishing in Boca Grande Pass (for any species, year-round), gear that has a weight attached to a hook, artificial fly or lure in such a way that the weight hangs lower than the hook when the line or leader is suspended vertically from the rod is prohibited. For the purposes of this rule, live or dead natural bait is not considered to be a weight. If this gear is on board a fishing vessel while inside the boundaries of the Pass, it cannot be attached to any rod, line or leader and must be stowed. This is an example of prohibited gear:



What rigs are legal?

Here are some examples of gear that are considered legal.



Jigs, butterfly jigs and spoons, such as the ones pictured above and below, are still allowed gear.



Hi-Lo or Chicken Rig used with live or dead bait to target bottom fish and reef species.



Bottom rig used to target a variety of fish species with live or dead bait.

Does natural (live or dead) bait constitute a weight?

No. Live or dead natural bait is not considered to be weight.

Do rules prohibiting the use of breakaway gear and limiting the number of fishing lines that can be deployed from a vessel at any one time to three during the months of April, May and June in Boca Grande Pass still apply?

Yes. These rules were not altered or removed. When fishing for any species in Boca Grande Pass during the months of April, May and June, the use of breakaway gear is prohibited and no more than three fishing lines may be deployed from a vessel at any one time.

Am I required to use circle hooks when fishing for tarpon?

While recommended, anglers are not required to use circle hooks when targeting tarpon. If you catch a reef fish while targeting tarpon on a non-circle hook it must be released.

Can I tow a tarpon to a weigh station or other location?

Only if the tarpon is properly tagged and the angler believes the tarpon may qualify for an IGFA record. All harvest of tarpon has been eliminated, with the exception of the harvest or possession of a single tarpon per year when in pursuit of an IGFA record and in conjunction with a tarpon tag. A tarpon that does not have a tarpon tag attached to it can be temporarily possessed only for photography, measurement of length and girth and scientific sampling, with the stipulation that tarpon more than 40 inches must remain in the water, but it cannot be towed to another location or weigh station.

One form of scientific sampling for which an angler may remove smaller tarpon from the water is the Tarpon Genetics Recapture Study, which uses the analysis of tarpon DNA to establish a DNA "fingerprint" of tarpon in Florida. DNA samples are collected and submitted by volunteers eager to protect the silver kings through better understanding of tarpon biology. To [learn more about the purpose, mechanics, and early results of this study](#) and how you can play an active and vital role in this research visit MyFWC.com/Research and click on "Saltwater," "Tarpon" and "Tarpon Genetics."

Can I remove a tarpon from the water for a photo?

A tarpon that does not have a tarpon tag attached to it can be temporarily possessed only for photography, measurement of length and girth and scientific sampling, with the stipulation that tarpon more than 40 inches fork length must remain in the water.

To [learn more about fish handling](#) and how to help your catch and release fish survive visit MyFWC.com/Fishing and click on "Saltwater," "Recreational Regulations" and "Fish Handling."

What are the current regulations for fishing for tarpon?

- Hook-and-line only; snagging, snatch hooking, spearing and the use of a multiple hook in conjunction with live or dead natural bait is prohibited.
- Snagging is defined as catching or attempting to catch tarpon that have not been attracted or enticed to strike an angler's gear.
- Tarpon is a catch-and-release-only species, with the exception of the harvest or possession of a single tarpon when in pursuit of an IGFA record and in conjunction with a tarpon tag.
- Tarpon tags are limited to one per person, per year (except for charter boat captains).
- Transport or shipment of tarpon harvested with a tag is limited to one fish per person.
- Vessel limit of one tarpon harvested with a tag.
- People are allowed to temporarily possess a tarpon for photography, measurement of length and girth and scientific sampling, with the stipulation that tarpon more than 40 inches must remain in the water.
- Florida tarpon regulations extend into federal waters.
- No minimum size limit.

What are the current regulations for fishing in Boca Grande Pass?

- Fishing with gear that has a weight attached to a hook, artificial fly or lure in such a way that the weight hangs lower than the hook when the line or leader is suspended vertically from the rod is prohibited. This rule applies to fishing for all species year-round within Boca Grande Pass. If this gear is on board a fishing vessel while inside the boundaries of the Pass, it cannot be attached to any rod, line or leader and must be stowed. Natural bait is not considered to be a weight.
- During the months of April, May and June, no more than three fishing lines may be deployed from a vessel at any one time.
- During the months of April, May and June, no person shall use, fish with, or place in the water any breakaway gear.

Who can I contact for more information?

For more information contact the Division of Marine Fisheries Management at 850-487-0554.