



RECREATIONAL COMMERCIAL GEAR LICENSE (RCGL) GENERAL GUIDELINES AND RULES SUMMARY

May 12, 2020

These RCGL guidelines are intended to summarize applicable rules and statutes to assist Recreational Commercial Gear License holders with using their gear. They are not the full text of all applicable rules. *Furthermore, the Director has proclamation authority to restrict the setting of gear and adjust possession limits.* It is recommended to check recent proclamations for any changes before you fish. For a complete copy of the rules or for other inquiries, contact DMF at P.O. Box 769, Morehead City, NC 28557, by phone at 252-726-7021 or 800-682-2632 or online at <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/mf/>.

General Guidelines

- The RCGL is an annual license allowing limited amounts of commercial gear to be used to harvest fish for personal consumption only.
- The license cost is \$70 for NC residents and \$500 for non-residents. RCGLs can be obtained from any DMF license office or a *license agent of the Wildlife Resources Commission*.
- All harvest with RCGL gear must meet the recreational size and harvest limits. Seafood harvested cannot be sold.
- There is one possession limit of fish per RCGL except for crabs (see table).
- There is one gear limit per vessel except for gill nets (see table).
- The RCGL must be in possession while fishing.
- Unlicensed individuals may assist in fishing but at least one person must have a RCGL.
- A person under 16 years of age may use RCGL gear and take one possession limit if they are accompanied by a parent, grandparent or guardian holding a RCGL or have the parent's, grandparent's or guardian's RCGL in their possession.
- Most RCGL gear, with the exception of electro-fishing, must be identified with a pink buoy at least 5" in diameter and 5" long. The RCGL holder's last name and initials must be engraved in the buoy, or engraved on a metal or plastic tag attached to the buoy. Additionally, if a vessel is used, either the vessel registration number or documentation number of the vessel belonging to the owner of the gear must also be engraved in the buoy or on the tag.
- RCGL holders must comply with Division of Marine Fisheries sampling and surveying programs.
- A RCGL is not required when harvesting shellfish recreationally or using the following recreational gears; hook and line, hand operated rakes and tongs, collapsible crab traps, seines less than 30 feet, dip nets, landing nets, cast nets, gigs, spears and minnow traps.
- As of January 1, 2007, a Coastal Recreational Fishing License is required to use hook and line gear, cast nets, dip nets, gigs, spears and 2 or less minnow traps for the taking of finfish recreationally in joint or coastal fishing waters.
- The use of more than 2 minnow traps, or the harvesting of any fish or shellfish for the purpose of selling requires a commercial fishing license.

Authorized Gear	Gear Requirements and Limits	Marking and Line Requirements	Attendance required?	Closed Period?	Comments
Gill Nets and Estuarine Gill Net Permit	Maximum length 100 yards, two or more RCGL holders can possess and set up to 200 yards ¹ , minimum 2.5" stretched mesh ²	Each end of net must be marked with two yellow buoys and one hot pink buoy. First and middle initial, last name and NC boat number, engraved on buoy or plastic or metal tag on buoy.	For the most recent rules on attendance, please call 800-682-2632 or 252-726-7021.	All nets closed above ferry routes in Pamlico and Neuse Rivers. Gill nets with stretch mesh greater than 4" will be closed unless flounder season is open. See most recent Gill Net Proclamation for what managed areas and units are open or closed. See website for proclamations.	From June through October all unattended gill nets with a stretch mesh length 5" or greater must be set at least 10 feet from shore.
Shrimp and skimmer trawls	26 ft max headrope, 1 ½" min mesh, and two bycatch reduction devices are required. Ask DMF about prohibited trawl areas and bycatch reduction gear proclamations.	Hot pink buoy on tail bag. First and middle initial, last name and NC boat number, engraved on buoy or plastic or metal tag on buoy.	Yes	Yes, 9pm Fridays to 5pm Sundays except for in the Atlantic Ocean.	Mechanical retrieval requires a Turtle Excluder Device.
Seines	30-100 ft, must be deployed or retrieved by hand, for shrimp 1 ¼" min mesh.	Hot pink buoy on cork line, First and middle initial, last name and NC boat number, engraved on buoy or plastic or metal tag on buoy.	Yes	No	Cannot seine for shrimp in closed trawling areas.

Authorized Gear	Gear Requirements and Limits	Marking and Line Requirements	Attendance required?	Closed Period?	Comments
Shrimp Pound	One pound net, dimensions of pound must be 36"x36" or smaller constructed of 1 ¼" mesh or greater, max 10 ft lead total w/ 1 ½" min mesh.	Hot pink buoy attached to offshore lead First and middle initial, last name and NC boat number, engraved on buoy or plastic or metal tag on buoy.	Yes, remove pound when not being fished.	No	Min 100 yds between RCGL shrimp pounds and 300 yds from permitted commercial shrimp pounds.
Crab Pots ³	Max of 5 pots regardless of type. A minimum of 3 escape rings are required per pot at least 2 5/16" inside diameter. See current proclamation or DMF website for specifics about ring placement. Ask DMF about prohibited pot areas ⁴ .	Non-floating line, hot pink buoy. First and middle initial, last name and NC boat number, engraved on buoy or plastic or metal tag on buoy.	No, but must be fished at least every 5 days, cannot be fished at night.	Yes, all pots must be removed from Jan. 1 – Jan. 30 North of the Hwy 58 bridge. March 1 – March 15 South of the Hwy 58 bridge. Mature females w/dark (brown or black) sponge April 1 – April 30.	Max 50 crabs per RCGL holder per day or 100 crabs per vessel/day if 2 or more RCGL holders are on board vessel. Peeler pots not allowed. One pot set from private pier exempted from RCGL requirements.
Fish Pots ³	Max of 5 pots regardless of type, ask DMF about prohibited pot areas ⁴ .	Hot pink buoy. First and middle initial, last name and NC boat number, engraved on buoy or plastic or metal tag on buoy.	No, but must be fished at least every 5 days.	Yes, all pots must be removed from Jan. 15 – Feb. 7.	RCGL requirements do not apply to minnow traps.
Eel Pots ³	Max of 5 pots regardless of type, only 2 can be eel if used for bait, minimum mesh size of ½" by ½". Ask DMF about prohibited pot areas ⁴ and other specifics.	Hot pink buoy. First and middle initial, last name and NC boat number, engraved on buoy or plastic or metal tag on buoy.	No, but must be fished at least every 5 days.	Yes, all pots must be removed from Jan. 15 – Feb. 7.	

Authorized Gear	Gear Requirements and Limits	Marking and Line Requirements	Attendance required?	Closed Period?	Comments
Shrimp Pots ³	Max of 5 pots regardless of type, mesh size cannot be less than 1 ¼" stretched mesh or 5/8" bar. Ask DMF about prohibited pot areas ⁴ .	Hot pink buoy. First and middle initial, last name and NC boat number, engraved on buoy or plastic or metal tag on buoy.	No, but must be fished at least every 5 days.	Yes, all pots must be removed from Jan. 15 – Feb. 7.	
<i>Electro-Fishing See pg 24 of Rulebook</i>	<i>Hand operated</i>				<i>Taking of catfish in Cape Fear River as described in 03J.0304.</i>
Trot Lines	100 FT	One solid foam hot pink buoy at least 5x5 inches. First and middle initial and last name and NC# engraved on buoy or plastic or metal tag on buoy.	No attendance	No closed period	

¹RCGL holders accompanied by a family member under 16 years of age can have a creel limit but cannot exceed the authorized gear limits.

²Some areas may require a larger mesh size or a maximum mesh size. Please call DMF for details.

³RCGL holders are limited to setting a total of five eel, fish, shrimp or crab pots; of the five, only two can be eel pots.

⁴Contact DMF for areas that are closed to pots in accordance with 15A NCAC 03J .0301 and proclamation M-7-2020. Pots cannot be set in navigation channels marked by state or federal agencies or in a turning basin marked by the NC Ferry Division. Contact DMF for details.