



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DoE Reminds Residents of Fishery Seasons**

The Department of Environment (DoE) wishes to remind the public of open and closed seasons which occur at this time of year for a variety of species.

According to the DoE, everyone should make an effort to be aware of the seasons, and to comply with them, as they have been put in place as a means of ensuring the long-term and sustainable use of our marine resources.

In August of this year, improvements were made to the Cayman Islands fisheries regulations. All of the species rules now make both take and possession illegal outside of the open seasons. This means that both the person taking marine life illegally and the person receiving/purchasing this marine life will be committing an offence.

'This is a loophole that our officers, and the public who support conservation, have struggled with for a while and we are happy it has been resolved', said DoE Chief Conservation Officer Mark Orr observed.

Catch limits remain unchanged.

The rules for Nassau grouper have also undergone significant changes with the take of Nassau Grouper anywhere in Cayman waters now prohibited between 1 December and 30 April. As the weather cools, Nassau grouper begin to aggregate in preparation for spawning early in the New Year. These annual aggregations have made the species susceptible to overfishing in Cayman and around the Caribbean.

'While we still have one of the largest Nassau grouper populations among the known spawning aggregations remaining in the Caribbean, we have effectively lost over half of our traditional spawning aggregations in the Cayman Islands,' said DoE Research Officer Bradley

Johnson. 'Fishing on a spawning aggregation is not and never has been sustainable for any level of take as shown by DoE's research, as well as the decline of spawning aggregations across the region.

'The current regulations are meant to ensure that we have Nassau grouper on our reefs into the future. This is the same strategy applied to other marine species like conch and lobster. During the open season (1 May through 30 November) fishers may take no more than five Nassau grouper from Cayman waters per boat per day', he said.

Persons are encouraged to make themselves aware of the full provisions of the regulations. The DoE is distributing free Conservation Rules Brochures at a variety of places around all three islands and these brochures may also be downloaded from [www.DoE.ky](http://www.DoE.ky).

Another tool developed to help the public stay informed is an app for iPhones and Android smartphones. While this is still a Beta version of the app, some of the features include interactive maps which allow the public to know where they are located in relation to the marine park zones, what the rules are in the area in which they are located, and to send feedback to DoE on anything they deem to be important or of concern.

Persons can download the app by searching their smartphone store for 'Cayman DoE' and are encouraged to report any technological glitches to the DoE so that they can be rectified.

The public is reminded that the app is still a form of electronic communication and, as such, if there is an urgent situation they should either report the matter to 911 or directly to DoE at any of the numbers listed below.

'We know that enforcement will always be an issue with any law and that our efforts will always be constrained by the number of officers we are able to employ', DoE Director Gina Ebanks-Petrie said. 'So we have to work smarter, both through the use of technology and by trying to ensure that our regulations are structured to optimise conservation objectives and enforcement capability'.

Persons who see suspect poaching can call 911, or DoE enforcement officers directly:

- Grand Cayman: 916-4271
- Cayman Brac: 926-0136
- Little Cayman: 916-7021

Below is a list of species and information related to their season dates and catch limits:

- LOBSTERS (*Panulirus argus*)
  - Closed season: 1 March through 30 November.

- Open season catch limit: Three per person or six per boat per day, whichever is less.
- Size limit: Six inch tail minimum size.
- Only spiny lobster (*P. argus*) may be taken.
- In any one day, no one person may take or permit another person to take, purchase, receive, offer for sale, exchange or donation, or possess more than three lobster from Cayman waters.
- **CONCH (*Strombus gigas*)**
  - Closed season: 1 May through 31 October.
  - Open season catch limit: Five per person or ten per boat per day, whichever is less. (10 per boat with two or more people.)
  - Only queen conch (*S. gigas*) may be taken.
  - In any one day, no one person may take or permit another person to take, purchase, receive, offer for sale, exchange or donation, or possess more than five conch from Cayman waters.
- **WHELKS**
  - Closed season: 1 May through 31 October. No one may take whelks in Cayman during these months. No one may purchase, receive or possess whelk taken in Cayman during these months.
  - Open season catch limit: Two-and-a-half gallons in the shell or two-and-a-half pounds of processed whelks per person per day.
  - No one may purchase or receive more than two-and-a-half gallons in the shell or two-and-a-half pounds processed whelks from Cayman in any one day.
  - Chitons, periwinkles and bleeding teeth may not be taken at any time.
- **ECHINODERMS**
  - Echinoderms (includes starfish, sea eggs/urchins, sea cucumbers and sand dollars) may not be taken from Cayman waters at any time.
- **TURTLES**
  - No one may disturb, molest or take turtles in Cayman waters or on Cayman's beaches without a licence.
  - Possession of turtle eggs is prohibited.
  - For licensed fishermen, closed season runs from 1 April through 30 November.

- SHARKS & RAYS
  - May not be taken from Cayman waters at any time.
  - No one may feed, attempt to feed or provide or use food to attract any shark in Cayman waters.
- NASSAU GROUPER (*Epinephelus striatus*)
  - Closed season: 1 December through 30 April
  - Open season catch limit: Five per person or five per boat per day, whichever is less.
  - Size limit: Only Nassau grouper between 16 inches and 24 inches (inclusive) may be taken from Cayman waters.
  - No one may take, purchase, receive, permit or possess Nassau grouper from Cayman waters taken in contravention of the above rules.
- OTHER FISH
  - Protected fish: Jew fish (goliath grouper), tilefish (whities), filefish (pipers) and angelfish, including Grey, French and Queen angels (old monks), may not be taken from Cayman waters at any time.
  - Size limit: Eight-inch minimum size on all other fish except goggle eyes, sprats (herrings, anchovies) and fries (including loggerhead and fine fry; silversides or anchovies). Or lionfish.

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