



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Lobster Season Closes 1 March 2018**

The Department of Environment (DoE) reminds the public that the closed season for lobster begins on 1 March and runs until 30 November.

During the closed season, it is illegal to take, purchase, receive or possess lobster originating from Cayman Islands waters.

“The closed season is designed to give the local lobster population a break from harvesting during the times of year when they reproduce the most,” said DoE Senior Research Officer John Bothwell. “We urge persons not to support poaching. Don’t buy lobsters from people during the closed season - it’s a crime and should be reported to the authorities.”

Other fishery rules include possession clauses which apply to all individuals and businesses. They are:

- Sharks and rays may not be taken from Cayman Islands waters at any time
- Nassau grouper
  - Closed season: 1 December through 30 April.
  - Anyone who takes, purchases, receives, offers for sale, exchange or donation, or possesses, or permits another person to take, Nassau grouper (*Epinephelus striatus*) from Cayman Islands waters during the closed season commits an offence.
  - Sharks, rays, and Nassau grouper (during closed season) should be released alive if accidentally caught, even if they are injured during catching. For sharks, simply cut the line as close to the hook as is safe.
  - Using circle hooks when fishing makes releasing undersized fish, or protected species like Nassau grouper, stingrays, or sharks, easier as they are unlikely to be gut hooked.

- Having a release rig ready to use when fishing in more than 75 feet of water means you can easily release undersized, undesirable or protected species (like Nassau grouper), as their swim bladders will recompress by using the release rig.
- Conch
  - Open season is 1 November through 30 April.
  - Bag limit is five per person, or 10 per boat per day, whichever is less.
  - Only queen conch (*Strombus gigas*; also known as a pink conch or broadleaf conch) may be taken.
  - In any one day, anyone who takes, purchases, receives, offers for sale, exchange or donation, or possesses, or permits another person to take, more than five conch from Cayman Islands waters, commits an offence.
- Whelk
  - Open season is 1 November through 30 April.
  - Bag limit is 2.5 gallons in the shell, or 2.5lbs of processed whelks per person per day.
  - In any one day, anyone who takes, purchases, receives, offers for sale, exchange or donation, or possesses, or permits another person to take, more than 2.5 gallons in the shell, or 2.5lbs of processed whelks from Cayman Islands waters commits an offence.
  - Chitons, periwinkles and bleeding teeth may not be taken at any time.
  - Echinoderms (including starfish, sea eggs/urchins, sea cucumbers and sand dollars) may not be taken from Cayman Islands waters at any time.
- Lobster
  - Open season is 1 December to 28 February.
  - Minimum size is a six-inch tail length.
  - Bag limit is three per person, or six per boat per day, whichever is less.
  - In any one day, anyone who takes, purchases, receives, offers for sale, exchange or donation, or possesses, or permits another person to take, more than three lobsters from Cayman Islands waters commits an offence.
  - Only spiny lobsters, *Panulirus argus*, may be taken.
  - No wearing of gloves while snorkelling.
  - No taking of lobster (or any marine life other than lionfish) while scuba diving.

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

- Grand Cayman: 916-4271
- Cayman Brac: 926-0136
- Little Cayman: 925-0185

Information for later investigation, i.e., that is not time sensitive, can be reported anonymously to

Cayman Crime Stoppers, by calling 800-TIPS. This is a free, local call in the Cayman Islands, but it is answered by the Crime Stoppers call centre in Miami.

Full National Conservation Law brochures (including Marine Park maps as well as the above and other rules) may be downloaded from [www.DoE.ky/marine/marine-parks](http://www.DoE.ky/marine/marine-parks). For more information on all of the closed seasons and other conservation rules, contact the DoE on 949-8469 or email [DoE@gov.ky](mailto:DoE@gov.ky).

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