



Town of Barnstable
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Recreational Shellfishing Frequently Asked Questions:

1. Do I need a permit to go shellfishing?

Yes! Resident, Non-resident, and seasonal non-resident permits can be purchased via online or mail in. For more information, please go to:
<https://tobweb.town.barnstable.ma.us/Departments/shellfishing/Forms-Resources/Recreational-Shellfish-Permits-ApplicationHow-to-Obtain-a-Shellfish-License.pdf?tm=5/27/2021%203:18:31%20PM>

2. Is my permit valid to use outside the Town of Barnstable?

No, Town of Barnstable recreational shellfishing permits are only valid within the seven villages of the Town of Barnstable, no exceptions.

3. When can I go shellfishing?

Recreational Shellfishing Days are Sundays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays. The week begins on Sunday, and ends on Saturday. All Town observed holidays are also recreational shellfishing days, and can be found online at:
https://www.townofbarnstable.us/Departments/HumanResources/Employee_Resources/2020-Holiday-Schedule.pdf?tm=7/30/2020%201:32:41%20PM

4. What time should I go shellfishing?

Shellfishing is allowed ½ hour before sunrise to sunset. You should try to shellfish around low tide, about an hour before low to an hour after low.

5. Who can shellfish on my permit?

Shellfish permits are non-transferable. A recreational permit holder may take guests to dig with them as long as only one weekly limit is taken. One limit per permit is allowed. The permit holder (which can be either spouse/domestic partner within a family) must be present and is responsible for any violations against the shellfish rules and regulations by the guest.

6. What are the weekly limits?

Quahogs- 1 level peck/week, Soft Shell Clams- 1 level peck/week, Oysters (when in season)- ½ peck/week, Scallops (when in season)- 1 level bushel/week, Razor Clams- 1 level peck/week, Blue Mussels- 1 level bushel/week

7. What are the minimum sizes for shellfish?

Quahogs- 1" in shell thickness, Soft Shell Clams- 2" total shell length, Oysters- 3" in length, Scallops- well defined annual growth ring, Blue Mussels and Razor Clams have no minimum size requirements

Shell Length

surf clam, softshell clam, sea scallop
oyster

Shell Thickness

quahogs



Shell Width

whelks



8. What is a quahog?

Hard shell clams, *Mercenaria mercenaria*, are also referred to as littlenecks, top necks, cherrystones, chowders and hogs depending on their size. They are all quahogs.

9. What is a soft shell clam?

Soft shell clams, *Mya arenaria*, are named for the brittleness of their shell, and are often referred to as steamers.

10. What is a peck?

A peck is a 10 quart basket used to carry your shellfish catch.

11. What is a bushel?

A bushel is a 40 quart basket used to carry your shellfish. You are allowed to take 1 bushel of shellfish/week abiding by limits of individual species.

12. What is seed?

Seed is any shellfish that is not large enough to be legally harvested. These are referred to as seed because they have not had a chance to spawn (make babies) yet.

13. What's the best way to return seed?

Seed clams should be returned to where they were dug immediately. Backfilling of all holes dug on dry land is required to help protect the seed. Steamer seed should be re-planted with the siphon (tube) oriented up.

14. What tools can I use?

You can use your hands, standard clam hoe (rake), basket rake, tongs, dipnet, bullrake and plungers. NO shovels or pitchforks are allowed.

15. How should I store my shellfish?

You can temporarily store them in a bucket with salt water so they can purge a little before refrigeration. The following website has information regarding how best to keep your catch safe for consumption.

<https://www.townofbarnstable.us/Departments/shellfishing/Resources/Safe-Shellfish-for-Recreational-Harvesters.pdf?tm=7/29/2020%2011:11:35%20AM>

16. Where should I go shellfishing?

Anywhere in the Town of Barnstable that is in “open” status. Interactive shellfish maps are available online at:

<https://gis.townofbarnstable.us/Html5Viewer/Index.html?viewer=ShellfishClosures>

Maps of specific areas are available online at:

<https://www.townofbarnstable.us/departments/shellfishing/Open-and-Closed-Shellfish-Area-Maps.asp>

17. Where are the “hotspots”?

There are designated recreational shellfishing areas at Bridge St Landing in Osterville, Little River Road in Cotuit (Handy Point Recreational Area), Scudder’s Lane (open seasonally, be sure to look at signage). In addition, areas of Three Bays are stocked when possible by Shellfish Staff including: Bluff Point Relay Area (accessible via Oceanview Ave), South Bay Rd in Osterville, Bay St in Osterville (open seasonally), the Cotuit Narrows (accessible via Cordwood Landing in Cotuit).

18. What is a seasonal permit?

Seasonal permits cost \$70 and are valid June 1 through August 31st. Non-residents can always upgrade their seasonal permit to a year round permit for an additional \$70. Please note on your application that you are interested in a seasonal shellfish permit.

19. Can I dig in the grass?

If you are on the mainland shore, the marsh grass (thatch) is protected and you are not permitted to dig within the grass. Digging within the grass is only permitted if you are on an island, not connected to the mainland thatch. Dig sites in the thatch on flats and islands should always be repaired.

20. Do I need to remember my permit number?

No, but all individuals who are shellfishing need to have a digital or paper copy of the current years shellfish permit. Shellfish permits should be visibly displayed while shellfishing and transporting ashore. If you lose your permit, you can always log back into your account using the original personal log in link.