

**CHAPTER 68B-50**  
**BAITFISH TRAWL FISHERIES**

- 68B-50.001 Baitfish Trawls: Allowed for Directed Harvest of Listed Species in Northwest Region; Bycatch Allowance; Open Areas and Seasons; Gear Specifications; Definitions
- 68B-50.002 Tarp Purse Seine Pilot Program for Certain Counties: Baitfish Annual Season Harvest Limits

**68B-50.001 Baitfish Trawls: Allowed for Directed Harvest of Listed Species in Northwest Region; Bycatch Allowance; Open Areas and Seasons; Gear Specifications; Definitions.**

(1) Species – Baitfish trawls shall only be used for the directed harvest of the following species, within the waters of the state specified in subsection (3) of this rule:

- (a) Menhaden – Genus *Brevoortia*.
- (b) Round herring – *Etrumeus teres*.
- (c) Scaled sardine – *Harengula jaguana*.
- (d) Atlantic thread herring – *Opisthonema oglinum*.
- (e) Sardines – Genus *Sardinella*.
- (f) Anchovies – Genus *Anchoa*.
- (g) Round scad – *Decapterus punctatus*.
- (h) Chub mackerel – *Scomber japonicus*.
- (i) Blue runner – *Caranx crysos*.
- (j) Ladyfish – *Elops saurus*.

(2) Bycatch Allowance – Species harvested as an incidental bycatch of other species lawfully harvested in a baitfish trawl pursuant to this rule, other than those listed in subsection (1), shall not be deemed to have been unlawfully harvested or landed in violation of this rule if the combined whole weight of the bycatch does not exceed ten percent by weight of all fish in possession of the harvester at any time. This allowed bycatch shall include fish that are retained and subject to the limits specified in other chapters of Title 46 of the Florida Administrative Code.

(3) Open Areas and Seasons – Baitfish trawls shall be allowable gear for the directed harvest of the species specified in subsection (1), but only in state waters seaward of the Colregs Demarcation Line in the Northwest Region, beginning on April 1 and continuing through November 15 each year. This subsection shall be effective beginning July 1, 1996, and continuing through November 15, 1998. Thereafter, baitfish trawls shall not be allowable gear in any state waters, without further amendment of this rule.

(4) Gear Specifications – Any baitfish trawl used for the directed harvest of the finfish bait species listed in subsection (1) shall meet the following specification and operational requirements:

(a) No baitfish trawl shall be towed for more than 30 minutes, beginning when the trawl is placed in the water and ending when the trawl is completely removed from the water.

(b) In the open areas specified in subsection (3), no more than two unconnected baitfish trawls, each with a perimeter around the leading edge of the net not greater than 66 feet and a mesh area not greater than 500 square feet, shall be fished or deployed from any vessel.

(c) No baitfish trawl or any part thereof shall contact the sea floor. This specification shall not be construed to prohibit the use of no more than two weights connected to the leg lines of a trawl that may contact the sea floor while the trawl is towed and fished at the surface of the water.

(d) No baitfish trawl shall be deployed or fished that has a mesh size less than 1 1/4 inches stretched mesh in the cod end. The use of any liner or insert in the cod end with a smaller mesh is prohibited.

(5) Definitions – For purposes of this rule:

(a) "Baitfish trawl" means a net in the form of an elongated bag with the mouth kept open by various means and buoyed by enough floats to assure that when it is towed and fished, it will be visible at and tend the surface of the water.

(b) "Cod end," also known as the "tail" or "bag" of a shrimp trawl, means the terminal cylinder of heavy webbing in which the catch is concentrated as the trawl is fished and which is closed at its rearmost extent by means of purse line or draw string.

(c) "Mesh area" of a net means the total area of netting with the meshes open to comprise the maximum square footage. The square footage shall be calculated using standard mathematical formulas for geometric shapes. The mesh area of a trawl shall be

calculated as a cone using the maximum circumference of the net mouth to derive the radius, and the maximum length of the net with meshes open from the center of the headrope at the net mouth to the tail end of the net to derive the slant height.

(d) "Northwest Region" means all state waters of Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Bay, Gulf, and Franklin counties, and all state waters of Wakulla County west of the following described line:

Beginning at the St. Marks Lighthouse, proceed southerly on a straight line to flashing channel marker #1; thence, southerly in a straight line to a point on the state waters boundary where a straight line from flashing channel marker #1 to flashing bell buoy #24 intersects with said boundary.

(e) "Perimeter" means the opening or entrance to a baitfish trawl formed and limited by attachment of the net mesh to a line or frame, which line or frame is securely attached so as to form a continuous perimeter around the leading edge of the net. The perimeter so formed is measured from point to point along the line or frame forming the leading edge of the net.

*Specific Authority Art. IV, Sec. 9, Fla. Const. Law Implemented Art. IV, Sec. 9, Fla. Const. History—New 6-3-96, Formerly 46-50.001.*

### **68B-50.002 Tarp Purse Seine Pilot Program for Certain Counties: Baitfish Annual Season Harvest Limits.**

(1) This rule shall govern the harvest of the following baitfish species in the region comprised by Wakulla, Franklin, Gulf, Bay, Okaloosa, and Walton Counties:

- (a) Anchovy (Family *Engraulidae*).
- (b) Blue runner (*Caranx crysos*).
- (c) Atlantic thread herring (*Opisthonema oglinum*).
- (d) Ladyfish (*Elops saurus*).
- (e) Chub mackerel (*Scomber japonicus*).
- (f) Menhaden (Genus *Brevoortia*).
- (g) Spanish sardines (*Sardinella aurita*).
- (h) Round scad (*Decapterus punctatus*).
- (i) Little tunny (*Euthynnus alletteratus*).

(2)(a) The season for commercial harvest of each of the species listed in subsection (1) in the region shall begin on July 1 of each year and continue through June 30 of the following year, unless closed earlier for a particular species pursuant to paragraph (b) of this subsection.

(b) If, during the established season for a species listed in subsection (1), the total harvest of that species in the region is projected to reach the season commercial harvest limit specified in subsection (3) prior to the June 30 close of the season, the season for the species shall be closed on the date that such harvest is projected to reach that limit, by the Executive Director of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission upon notice and in the manner provided in Section 120.81(5), Florida Statutes.

(3) Annual Commercial Season Harvest Limits for the Region.

(a) The annual season commercial harvest limits in the region for the species listed in subsection (1) are as follows:

- 1. Anchovy – 85,000 pounds.
- 2. Blue runner – 508,000 pounds.
- 3. Thread herring – 308,000 pounds.
- 4. Ladyfish – 2,088,000 pounds.
- 5. Chub mackerel – 72,000 pounds.
- 6. Menhaden – 2,415,000 pounds.
- 7. Spanish sardines – 943,000 pounds.
- 8. Round scad – 999,000 pounds.
- 9. Little tunny – 392,000 pounds.

(b) The total commercial harvest of any one of these species for the region during a particular season shall consist of those fish commercially harvested by all forms of gear from waters of the counties of the region and adjacent Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) waters, based on projections from official statistics collected and maintained by the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission pursuant to Florida's Marine Fisheries Information System. The count shall begin with those fish commercially harvested on and after July 1 of each year and continue until June 30 of the following year or until the harvest limit prescribed in paragraph (a) of this subsection is reached, whichever occurs first.

(c) If the commercial fishing season for any of the species governed by this rule is closed in the region prior to June 30, the commercial harvest of the species affected, in the counties of the region, is prohibited until the following July 1.

*Specific Authority Art. IV, Sec. 9, Fla. Const. Law Implemented Art. IV, Sec. 9, Fla. Const. History—New 11-12-97, Formerly 46-50.002.*