Tampa Bay Shore Fishing Cheat Sheet

Late fall / winter 2026–27. Updated Nov 10, 2026; confirm before you go. Seasonal guidance, not a catch report. ShoreReady Tampa is not affiliated with any agency.

License at a glance

- **Florida residents** who only saltwater fish from land or a structure attached to land can get the no-cost Resident Annual Saltwater Shoreline Fishing License. Wading counts if you can stand on the bottom and did not arrive by boat.
- **Non-residents** are not eligible for that free shoreline license. Rechecked Nov 10, 2026 prices: saltwater 3-day $17, 7-day $30, annual $47. Resident annual saltwater license: $17. Prices can change; confirm with FWC.
- **Exemptions include** youth under 16; Florida residents 65+ with proof of age and residency; anglers on a pier that holds a valid saltwater pier license. This is not a complete list — see FWC and shorereadytampa.com/license/. Do not assume a given pier is licensed. Fort De Soto requires a fishing license throughout the park, including piers.
- **Keeping snook:** license plus $10 snook permit required, except on saltwater license-free days. Harvest only in an open season and within limits. Hook and line only.
- **Shore-based shark fishing:** age 16+ needs the free permit after the Shark-Smart course, even if license-exempt. Stay away from swimmers. This permit is not listed as waived on license-free days.
- **License-free saltwater day:** Saturday, Nov 28, 2026 (the Saturday after Thanksgiving). The saltwater license requirement is waived for residents and non-residents, and a snook or spiny lobster permit is also not required that day. Seasons, bag and size limits still apply. Park entry and parking charges still apply. Get a license at GoOutdoorsFlorida.com.

Season calendar

Species / area	Calendar	Harvest basics (confirm with FWC)
Snook — Tampa Bay region	Open through Nov 30; closed Dec 1–end of February; open Mar 1–Apr 30. Also closed May 1–Aug 31.	28–33 inches total length; 1/person/day; license + snook permit to keep (permit also waived on license-free days); hook and line only. Rechecked Nov 10, 2026.
Flounder	Closed Oct 15–Nov 30; opens Dec 1–Oct 14. November is catch-and-release only.	14-inch total-length minimum; 5/person/day when open. Rechecked Nov 10, 2026.
Redfish — Tampa Bay	Open year-round under supplied rules.	18–27 inches total length; 1/person, 2/vessel.
Spotted seatrout — Tampa Bay region*	Open year-round under supplied rules.	15–19 inches total length; 3/person/day. From shore, one over 19 inches may be kept and counts toward the bag.
Sheepshead	Open year-round; winter structure focus builds Nov–Mar, with Feb–Mar the site's best seasonal focus.	12-inch total-length minimum; 8/person/day. Vessel limit 50 in March and April.
Florida pompano	Open year-round; seasonal focus is spring/fall, not a promised winter bite.	11-inch fork-length minimum; 6/day.

*Trout region here means Pinellas waters south of Fred Howard Park Causeway and all Hillsborough waters. Confirm the rule for your exact location. Whiting is another cooler-month sand option; check current FWC rules before keeping fish.

Ten practical places to compare

Listed open in site data unless noted. Confirm current access, hours, fees and fishing rules before you go. “Good for” is habitat fit, not a current catch report.

Spot	County	Hours	Entry / parking	Good for
Gulfport Williams Pier	Pinellas	24 hours	Free admission (City of Gulfport, checked Nov 11, 2026).	Sheepshead, Mangrove snapper, Spotted seatrout, Ladyfish
Boca Ciega Millennium Park Shoreline	Pinellas	7 a.m. to sunset, 7 days a week; closed the day after Thanksgiving and December 25	No parking fees.	Redfish, Spotted seatrout, Snook
Dunedin Causeway	Pinellas	5 a.m. to 11 p.m. (fishing after 11 p.m. only with a Pinellas County Sheriff permit)	Free parking in the pull-off and access areas along the causeway.	Spotted seatrout, Redfish, Sheepshead, Ladyfish
Fort De Soto Gulf Pier	Pinellas	7 a.m. to sunset, 7 days a week, including the day after Thanksgiving and December 25 (county lists the park open all year; confirm before you go).	Paid: County beach parking fee $6 per day through November 30, 2026 (pay stations, mobile apps, pay-by-text, or annual pass); $3.50/hour capped at $12/day beginning December 1, 2026.	Spanish mackerel, Florida pompano, Whiting, Cobia
St. Pete Pier Fishing Deck	Pinellas	Fishing: 30 minutes before sunrise to 11 p.m., 7 days a week	Paid: Dolphin and Pelican lots by pay station or ParkMobile zone 2015, 24/7 enforcement, 6-hour limit ($15 to $18 for 6 hours depending on rate period). Longer stays at Sundial garage. No overnight parking. Free Downtown Looper trolley.	Sheepshead, Mangrove snapper, Crevalle jack, Black drum
Honeymoon Island State Park — Beaches and Pass	Pinellas	8 a.m. to sundown, 365 days a year	$8 per vehicle; $4 single-occupant vehicle; $2 pedestrians and bicyclists (state park entry).	Florida pompano, Snook, Spotted seatrout, Flounder
E.G. Simmons Conservation Park Shoreline	Hillsborough	Spring/Summer 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Fall/Winter 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.	Entry $2 per vehicle (up to 8 people); $5 boat launch. Annual entry and after-hours fishing passes available.	Snook, Redfish, Tarpon, Spotted seatrout
Upper Tampa Bay Conservation Park	Hillsborough	8 a.m. to 6 p.m.	$2 per vehicle.	Snook, Redfish, Spotted seatrout
Williams Park (Alafia River at U.S. 41)	Hillsborough	Sunrise to sunset	No parking fee listed; $5 to launch a boat (debit/credit only).	Snook, Tarpon, Redfish, Crevalle jack
Riverview Civic Center Fishing Pier (Alafia River)	Hillsborough	Sunrise to sunset	Park: free; boat launch $5.	Snook, Crevalle jack, Tarpon, Redfish

Gulfport Williams Pier lists free admission; that does not establish a license exemption. Upper Tampa Bay and other snook spots: do not harvest snook during the Dec–Feb closure. Williams Park: swimming and wading prohibited.

Closed right now in the supplied listing

- **Ballast Point Park Fishing Pier** — City of Tampa: the 600-foot fishing pier has been closed since spring 2025 because of hurricane damage. No reopening date has been published; the city posted a pier replacement design solicitation in Sept 2026. When open, the pier is free and open 24 hours; the rest of the park is open 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- **Dunedin Marina Fishing Pier** — City of Dunedin: hurricane-damaged pier demolished above water in early summer 2026; replacement construction awaits permits.
- **Weaver Park Fishing Pier** — City of Dunedin: pier unsafe and closed after 2024 hurricane damage; reconstruction awaits permits, no reopening date given.

Holiday and parking reminders

- **Nov 27, 2026:** Philippe Park, Weedon Island Preserve, Sand Key Park, Boca Ciega Millennium Park, Fred Howard Park and Wall Springs Park are listed closed. These also close Dec 25.
- **Fort De Soto:** Pinellas County lists the park open all year, including Nov 27 and Dec 25 (checked Nov 10, 2026, pinellas.gov/park-hours). Confirm before you go.
- **Dec 1 parking:** Fort De Soto, Sand Key and Fred Howard move from $6/day through Nov 30 to $3.50/hour, capped at $12/day. Park Boulevard Boat Ramp parking becomes $12/day Dec 1; the earlier fee amount is not listed in our data. Do not apply these rates to other parks.

Tide tip: Moving water matters. Check the chosen spot page at shorereadytampa.com for tides, then confirm safe access and conditions.

This is a planning aid, not legal advice or an agency notice. Hours, access, fees and regulations can change. Check current FWC rules (myfwc.com) and the managing agency’s notices.
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