



Florida Bass Aquaculture: Rules and Regulations

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INTRODUCTION

In 2021, [Section 597.004, Florida Statutes](#), was amended to allow for the culture of Florida bass (*Micropterus salmoides*) for human consumption. As the official state fish of Florida, protecting the genetic integrity of Florida bass is critical to ensuring long-term viability of this important and iconic Florida gamefish. For more information, visit the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) [Florida Bass/Largemouth Bass](#) webpage.

LICENSES AND PERMITS

To receive authorization to culture Florida bass for commercial use, you must apply for an [Aquaculture Certificate of Registration](#) using the [Aquaculture Portal](#) and comply with all applicable [Aquaculture Best Management Practices](#) (BMPs) from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS). Current certificate holders must submit a Florida bass production plan to the Division of Aquaculture before beginning any Florida bass culture.

Individuals purchasing and reselling cultured or imported Florida bass may require an additional [Freshwater Fish Dealers License](#), issued by FWC.

If you plan to process and sell your products for human consumption, you must also obtain a [Retail Food Establishment Permit](#) from FDACS Division of Food Safety.

SOURCE DOCUMENTATION

All facilities that produce Florida bass must:

- Submit broodstock acquisition documentation and genetic testing records for approval by the Division of Aquaculture via email at Aquaculture_Health@FDACS.gov prior to beginning any production of this species or utilizing new stock.
- Purchase fingerlings from a facility utilizing genetically authenticated broodstock.
- Maintain purchase records for three years beyond the life of the fish.

Genetically authenticated fingerlings utilized for grow-out do not require further genetic testing prior to transportation or sale.

GENETIC AUTHENTICATION

Genetic testing must be completed by an FWC authenticated laboratory and submitted by the laboratory directly to FDACS, Division of Aquaculture.

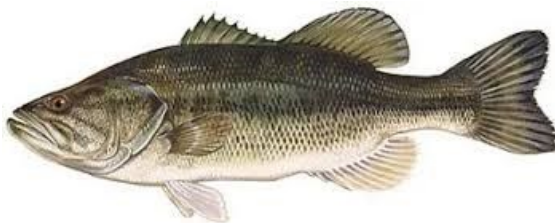
A list of FWC approved labs can be found on the [Aquaculture of Florida Largemouth Bass](#) webpage.

Testing results must correlate to individual tag numbers affixed to each broodfish. Remember to follow the source documentation procedure as noted above and located in the Aquaculture BMPs.

HATCHERY MANAGEMENT

In order to confirm the product is Florida bass, each hatchery holding broodstock and producing or selling Florida bass offspring must meet the following requirements:

- Wild collection of broodfish in Florida may only be conducted under an [Aquaculture Broodstock Collection Special Activity License \(SAL\)](#) issued by FWC in the region where the aquaculture facility is located. A genetic sample must be taken from each potential broodfish that is collected.
- Purchased broodfish or fingerlings must be from an authenticated and certified facility. Purchase records must be maintained for three years beyond the life of the fish.
- Each broodfish must be permanently tagged with a commercial tag utilizing individual ID numbers, and high retention rate. Passive integrated transponder (PIT) tags are recommended.
- A tag number may not be used on more than one broodfish.
- Each tag must remain in place throughout the time a fish is used as broodstock or is in the same tank or pond as current broodstock.
- Each year prior to spawning, it is recommended that each tagged broodfish be inspected and confirmed as authenticated Florida bass stock. Any fish that does not have a tag must be separated from tagged fish.
- Any largemouth bass or intergrades (i.e., hybrids) confirmed by genetic testing must be promptly euthanized or culled.



FDACS may take a random sample at any facility producing Florida bass to confirm genetic authentication standards.

If any sample is determined to not be Florida bass, that production system must be segregated until a secondary genetic analysis of submitted samples can be completed. If the secondary analysis determines samples to not be Florida bass, the entire production system where the samples were taken must be euthanized or culled. A summary of all genetic samples submitted for testing must be maintained onsite.

TRANSPORTATION AND SALE

Aquaculture products must be identified with an Aquaculture Certificate of Registration number (AQ#) while possessed, transported or sold from harvest to point of sale. The receipt, bill of sale, bill of lading or other such manifest must show where the product originated. If the product is sold to a Florida grow-out facility, the AQ# of the buyer must also be included.

Sales records must contain at least the following information:

- Date of Sale,
- Name and address of Seller,
- Seller's AQ#,
- Name and address of the Purchaser Purchaser's AQ# (if a Florida certified aquaculture facility),
- Quantity and species identification of aquaculture product sold, and
- Genetic authentication documentation if transporting live animals.

Out-of-state producers and persons buying, selling, importing, trading or transporting Florida bass in the state of Florida are responsible for ensuring genetic authentication and documentation by an FWC approved laboratory. Holders of any FWC Freshwater Fish Dealers License must obtain a no-cost [FWC Importation and Transportation Permit](#). **Documentation of genetic authentication must accompany all shipments or sales of live Florida bass.**

Please see Chapters XIII and XVII of the Florida [Aquaculture Best Management Practices](#) for shipment, transportation and rules information.

CONTAINMENT

Facilities cultivating, holding or transporting Florida bass must be designed, operated and maintained to prevent the escape of cultured aquatic species into waters of the state. Largemouth bass (*Micropterus nigricans*) must meet restricted species containment requirements throughout Florida. Intergrade largemouth bass (largemouth bass x Florida bass) must meet restricted species containment requirements at facilities south and east of the Suwannee River.

To possess and culture restricted nonnative species a facility must have [Restricted Species Authorization](#) from FDACS or a [Conditional Species Authorization \(CSA\)](#) from FWC.

If you have any other questions please review the BMP manual and contact the Division of Aquaculture directly at Aquaculture_Certificate@FDACS.gov.

How do PIT tags work?

Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tags are the most commonly used tags for identifying individual fish

1 Tags:

- Choice of different sizes depending on animal / fish size and desired read range
- Contain unique 10-15 digit alphanumeric ID code
- Are not battery operated and last "forever," or the entire lifetime of the fish

2 Injection Methods

Tags can be injected with a needle (left) or surgically implanted (right)

3 Antenna

Can come in many sizes and shapes such as rings, rectangles, handheld wands, and mobile antennas

Detection range influenced by:

- Frequency
- Antenna power
- Tag orientation
- Interference

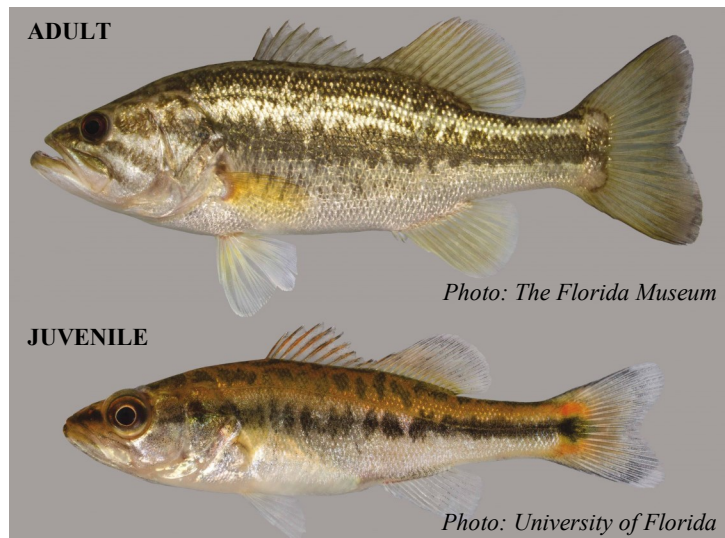
Detection range usually 3-18 inches

Computer records detection time and unique tag number

Photo: FISHBIO.com

FISHBIO SCIENCE EXPLAINED!

[Learn more about PIT tags at FISHBIO.com](#)



Florida Bass

