



Rules and Conditions for claiming National and State Spearfishing Records

A. CLASSES OF AWARDS

1. National Records

Only those fish which are speared and landed according to the USFA Spearfishing Rules may be considered for National record status. All applicants must carefully follow the requirements for filing claims.

- All USFA members will be eligible for claiming an open spearfishing record. Separate records will be kept for catches made by women and juniors (<18 years of age).
- Fish eligible for a National spearfishing record must be speared in Australian waters.

2. State Records

Only those fish which are speared and landed according to the USFA Spearfishing Rules may be considered for State record status. All applicants must carefully follow the requirements for filing claims.

- All USFA members will be eligible for claiming an open spearfishing record. Separate records will be kept for catches made by women and juniors (<18 years of age).
- Fish eligible for a State spearfishing record must be speared in waters bound by its relevant State or Territory.

B. DEFINITIONS

1. **FREEDIVING:** Freediving is defined as the sport of skin diving by which the individual swims on the surface or dives below the surface of the water unencumbered and unaided by artificial breathing devices (i.e., SCUBA, bailout bottle, etc.). The diver is completely free swimming and is not touching or holding on to any boat or floating device which has on board or is powered by motor or mechanical device.
2. **UNASSISTED:** Unassisted is defined as subduing the catch without the use of artificial breathing devices, without the benefit of exiting the water to retrieve or subdue the fish. The diver must complete the task without the assistance of another individual in subduing, capturing or securing the catch (i.e., helping to pull on the catch in any way, attaching the tether to the catch, handing the diver a loaded spear gun, touching or holding the diver while fighting the fish, or any other act which cause the fish to be subdued through the efforts of two people). This does not preclude the attendant diver from supplying equipment (unloaded guns, additional floats, additional tow line, or a stringer) given that the original diver must attach and tend the additional equipment and that the attendant does not touch any portion of the original or additional equipment until the catch is subdued.
3. **MUSCLE-POWERED SPEARGUN:** Any speargun that stores potential energy provided from the spearfisher's muscles only. The gun may only release that amount of energy that the diver has provided to it from their own muscles. Common temporary energy storing devices for spearguns are: rubber bands, springs, and sealed air chambers.
4. **ARTIFICIAL BREATHING DEVICE:** Any device which delivers air to the diver for breathing while under the surface of the water. This includes, but is not limited to, SCUBA, Hooka, "bailout" bottles (extra air) or re-breathers.
5. **SUBDUED FISH:** Any fish that is dispatched using the iki jime technique, taken ashore, placed on, or tethered to a boat with a line no more than 3 meters long, or on the belt stringer of the spearing diver.
6. **TETHER:** A length of rope or wire, not more than 3 meters long, attached securely to a boat, which is used to successfully and permanently subdue a fish by looping the tail or by looping the tether through the mouth and gill opening by the spearing diver.
7. **MUTILATED FISH:** A fish which is weakened by being previously speared, or attacked by sharks, or injured by propellers or by a commercial or recreational fishing process (e.g., a recently caught and tagged marlin). Any mutilation on the fish must be shown in a photograph and fully explained in a separate report accompanying the record application.

C. GENERAL RULES

1. Divers must be freediving when they spear and land their catch. The use of artificial breathing devices is not allowed at any time (e.g., to retrieve the speared fish).
2. Divers may leave the water to obtain additional equipment but the diver must reenter the water where exited (allowing for free boat movement) and continue the pursuit free swimming. No pursuit of the quarry by means of boat will be allowed.
3. If a diver loses contact with their floats and can no longer see them, they may re-enter a non moving boat and "spot" the floats. They must then re-enter the water where exited (allowing for free boat movement) and free swim in the direction of their floats and regain contact. Under no condition may the diver utilize the boat to re-contact their floats.
4. Due to the potentially dangerous aspect of using bait, lures, or other teasing and attracting devices, the USFA does not encourage the practice. However, it is allowed in all forms. If bait or chum is used, the applicant must declare the act on the basic application for record, and during the narrative for recording purposes. No detail of the chumming is necessary. A simple statement "working a chum line" will suffice.
5. Fish must be free-swimming, unrestricted by nets, traps, fishing lines or other devices.
6. Fish must not be in an artificial environment or marine protected biosphere such as penned-in bays, in close proximity to fish nets or fish rearing pens, or areas that are otherwise closed to fishing/spearfishing
7. The catch must follow all laws and regulations governing the species or the waters in which the fish was caught and everyone should have equal access/advantage (i.e. no special permit).
8. Another diver may provide a second or additional unloaded gun to the spearfisher, provided they do not assist the diver in any way to subdue their catch.
9. Fish mutilated by anything other than the spearfishing equipment of the applicant are not allowed.
10. The use of artificial light sources for night spearfishing is not allowed.

D. GEAR

1. Spearguns: The gun must be charged with muscle power only; no explosive or compressed power is allowed.
2. Sling/Polespear: The spear must be charged by muscle power and hand release only, no mechanical trigger release is allowed. Includes gear commonly known as sling, Hawaiian sling, polespear, three prong, etc.
3. Terminal gear: Trail line or reels are allowed. Floats of any size are allowed, provided they are solely propelled by the diver (i.e., no motors or any other mechanical means).
4. Divers must pull their fish to the surface while they remain in the water. Once the fish is subdued and at the surface it may be gaffed by someone in a safety boat. Another diver or crew member may pass unloaded spearguns or sling/polespear to the diver, provided they and their associated gear follow the regulations set forth above for the primary gear

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5. Power heads: Power heads are prohibited. They may be carried by the diver for defense, but they may not be used to spear or subdue their catch.
6. Artificial breathing apparatus: No artificial breathing apparatus is allowed.

E. ELIGIBLE FISH

All species of the class Chondrichthyes and class Osteichthyes will be considered by the USFA Board provided they are at least 450 grams and are not on the list of USFA Ineligible Species. The Board retains the right to reject species considered unworthy of recognition and in such cases the application fee will be returned. When in doubt the applicant is encouraged to contact the USFA for guidance before submitting the application.

INELIGIBLE SPECIES

Consistent with the mission of the USFA "to promote ethical, safe and sportsmanlike spearfishing practices, to encourage and support a sense of environmental responsibility among divers", the USFA Board continuously and independently reviews species that are on the ineligible list. The eligibility of a species is based on meeting one or more of the following criteria:

1. It is considered endangered by internationally recognized communities
 2. Its biology predisposes it to overfishing (such as sharks)
 3. It is not usually harvested for consumption and/or is a catch-and-release fishery trophy
 4. It is in serious decline and causing significant ecological impact that is well documented in the scientific literature
- The following species meet one or more of the above criteria and are ineligible for world record status:
- Order Syngnathiformes - Pipefish and allies, with the exclusion of Family Aulostomidae (Trumpetfishes) and Family Fistulariidae (Flutemouths);
 - Order Tetraodontiformes - Toadfish, Boxfish, Sunfish and allies with the exclusion of the Family Monacanthidae (Leatherjackets) and Family Balistidae (Triggerfishes).
 - Protected Species
 - Sharks and rays

F. WEIGHTS NEEDED TO DEFEAT OR TIE EXISTING RECORDS

1. To replace a record for a fish weighing less than 2 kilograms, the replacement must weigh at least 20 grams more than the existing record.
2. To replace a record for a fish weighing 2 kilograms or more, the replacement must weigh at least 50 grams more than the existing record.
3. Any catch that matches the weight of an existing record or exceeds the weight by less than the amount required to defeat the record will be considered an equal record. Nothing weighing less than the current record will be considered. Fractions metric equivalents will not be considered.

G. WEIGHING REQUIREMENTS

1. The fish must be weighed by an official weigh master (if one is available), or by an USFA representative, or by a recognized local person familiar with the scale. Disinterested witnesses to the weight should be used whenever possible.
2. The mouth may be secured to prevent stomach contents from falling out. If stomach contents should accidentally fall out, they cannot be replaced.
3. Fish must be clean when weighed. No sand or dirt may be clinging to them.
4. Fish may be frozen before they are weighed. If still frozen while being weighed, any adhering ice must be removed.
5. The weight of the sling or rope (if used to secure the fish or close the mouth) must be subtracted from the total weight.
6. At the time of the weighing, the actual gear used by the spearfisher to catch the fish must be exhibited to the weigh master and weight witness.
7. Only weights indicated by the gradations on the scale will be accepted. Visual interpolation between gradations is not allowed. Any weights that fall between two gradations must be rounded to the lower weight.
8. All record fish should be weighed on scales that have been checked for accuracy by government agencies or other qualified and accredited organizations. All scales must be regularly checked for accuracy and must be current within 12 months, or recertified within 2 weeks after the weighing. Application must include close-up picture of the certification stamp on the scale or documents from certifying agency showing last date of certification.
9. If there is no certified scale available, the scale may be cross-certified. Weigh objects of similar weight to the fish, and then perform a cross-calibration against a certified scale showing the same weight (include pictures). A penalty may be applied.
10. In extremely remote areas where no weighing scales are available, it will be permissible for the spearfisher to use their own scales provided that they are properly certified for accuracy by the appropriate government agency immediately after returning from the spearfishing trip. Official documentation of calibration or recertification after the catch must be included with the application.
11. The USFA reserves the right to have the scales recertified or checked.
12. When a catch cannot be weighed on land and must be weighed at sea, two efforts must be met. The first and most important is that the applicant and at least one witness must submit a short statement indicating the action of

the sea vs. the action of the scale. That is; describe the high and low measurement indicated on the scale by water movement (if any). If there is no movement, that must be said as well. Second, a still photo or video should be taken showing the minimum and maximum weight registered. In some cases there will be no difference. No application will be accepted without the requested statements. In the above circumstance, the average minimum weight must be used.

H. OTHER DOCUMENTATION

1. To assist in the verification of the weight, the length (fork length and total length - see application form) and girth of the fish must be photographed and recorded. A measuring tape made of a material that does not stretch or shrink, even when wet, must be used. Length shall be measured with the tape stretched straight above the fish (i.e., not conforming to the body contours) and girth shall be measured with the tape conforming tightly to the thickest portion of the body.
2. Weights calculated from length and/or girth shall not be accepted, however, a meritorious award may be made for a fish which exceeds both the length and girth of the current record.
3. Catch weighing or measurement must be witnessed and as much documentation as possible should accompany the application for the record.

I. APPLICATION

1. Applicants must record the date, location, common name and scientific name of their catch on an official application.
2. If the capture of the specie was recorded on video, the applicant is encouraged to submit a copy of the video along with the other required documents. This can include a link to the video if uploaded to an online media website.
3. Photographs, preferably color, must be submitted with the application, providing sufficient detail for unequivocal species determination. These photographs become the property of the USFA which may publish them as it deems appropriate. The pictures must be high enough resolution to be able to see the weight and measurements clearly and to be able to make a positive fish identification. If there is the slightest doubt regarding the identification of the fish based upon the photographs and other data offered, the fish should be examined by an ichthyologist or qualified fishery biologist before the record is submitted. If a scientist is not available, the fish should be retained in a preserved or frozen condition until a qualified authority can verify the species, or until the applicant is notified by USFA. If no decision can be made from the photographs, and the spearfisher can provide no further proof of the identification of the species, the record claim will not be considered.
4. Photographs should adhere to the following conditions:
 - Photographs showing the full length of the fish, the diver with the fish, the speargun(s) used to make the catch, and the scale used

to weigh the fish must accompany each application.

- In all cases, photographs should be taken of the fish in a hanging position and also lying on a flat surface on its side. The fish should be broadside to the camera and no part of the fish should be obscured. The fins must be fully extended and not obscured by hands or equipment, and the jaw or bill clearly shown. Avoid obscuring the keels of tunas and other keeled species with a tail rope.
 - When photographing a fish lying on its side, the surface beneath the fish should be smooth and a ruler or marked tape placed beside the fish if possible.
 - Photographs from various angles are most helpful.
 - A photograph of the fish on the scale with the actual weight visible is required.
 - In-the-water photographs, while not required, are requested if available.
5. Acceptance of the application is, in part, dependent upon the completeness of the description of the hunt and capture. Include gun type, terminal gear, depth at which the fish was speared, names of other divers present, name of the dive boat, use of chum, water visibility, sea state, distance from shore, estimated bottom depth, current conditions, time of day, and associated fish (e.g., other members of a school, bait fish, etc.).
 6. Witnesses to the catch: On all record claims, witnesses to the catch are highly desirable. Un-witnessed catches may be disallowed if questions arise regarding their authenticity. It is important that the witnesses can attest to the spearfisher's compliance with USFA rules.
 7. Time limits of claims: Complete application should be submitted within 12 months of date of capture.
 8. Incomplete claims: If an incomplete claim is submitted, it must be accompanied by an explanation of why certain portions are incomplete. An incomplete claim will be considered for a record if the following conditions are met:
 - a. The incomplete claim with explanations must be received within the 12 month period.
 - b. Missing data must be due to circumstances beyond the control of the spearfisher making the record claim.
 - c. All missing data must be supplied within a period of time considered to be reasonable in view of the particular circumstances.
 - d. Final decisions on incomplete claims will be made by the Records Committee.

J. PREPARING THE APPLICATION FORM

1. The Spearfisher must submit a completed USFA application form along with all required documentation.
2. The application must be prepared in English.
3. Applicant must fill out and submit the form online or by mail.
4. Extreme care should be exercised in measuring the fish, as the measurements are often important for weight verification and scientific

studies. (See the measurement diagram on the record application to be sure you have measured correctly.)

5. The spearfisher is responsible for ensuring that the necessary signatures and correct addresses of the boat captain, weigh master, and witnesses are on the application. Use of a boatman, guide, or weigh master as a witness is discouraged.
6. The application fee is \$25 for USFA members claiming an open record, and \$15 for members claiming a junior or ladies record. The application fee is required separately for National and State Records.

K. REGULATIONS GOVERNING APPLICATIONS

The spirit of the USFA is one of sportsmanship and honor and the entire purpose of our organization would be defeated if cheating were allowed.

1. In some cases, an USFA officer or representative may be asked to recheck information submitted on an application. Such action should not be regarded as doubt of the formal affidavit, but rather as evidence of the extreme care with which USFA investigates and maintains its records.
2. Deliberate falsification of an application will disqualify the record and any further applications by the applicant, and any existing records will be nullified.
3. Anyone who knowingly collaborates, assists, or furthers fraudulent applications will be disqualified from any further applications, and any existing records will be nullified. If this person is an USFA Director or representative, they will be immediately removed from their position with the USFA and will not be eligible for future consideration as a Director or representative.
4. The concerned parties, if they so request, may have an opportunity to be heard by the Board of Directors at their next meeting, by letter or in person.
5. Protested applications or disputed existing records will be reviewed by the USFA Board of Directors. Its decisions will be final. All USFA decisions will be based upon the intent of the regulations.

