

## DPNR Announces Snapper Fishing Ban Through December; Whelk Harvest Season Reopens

The Department of Planning and Natural Resources has reminded fishers that several snapper species are now off-limits until year's end, while the whelk harvest season has reopened with daily limits and licensing requirements for recreational catchers.

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The V.I. Department of Planning and Natural Resources has announced the annual closure of the snapper fishing season across the U.S. Virgin Islands, a move intended to protect key fish populations during their spawning period. The restriction began at the start of October and will remain in effect until December 31.

According to DPNR, the harvest and possession of black snapper, silk snapper, vermillion snapper, and blackfin snapper are now prohibited through the end of the year. The closure applies to both territorial waters of St. Thomas and St. John as well as federal waters surrounding the Virgin Islands.

“These seasonal restrictions are critical for protecting fish populations during their reproductive periods,” said a DPNR notice. The agency added that such closures “ensure the long-term sustainability of Virgin Islands fisheries” by preventing overfishing during breeding cycles.

While the snapper season is closed, DPNR also announced that the whelk harvesting season has officially reopened and will remain open until May 2026. However, the agency reminded residents that a recreational fishing license is required to legally collect whelks, and a daily limit of 24 per person is enforced.

The department’s annual announcements on fishing restrictions and reopenings are part of ongoing efforts to balance the preservation of local marine resources with the livelihoods of the territory’s fishing community.