



HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
Ministry for Health & Environment
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Gibraltar

PRESS RELEASE

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Government publishes Marine Protection and Tuna Preservation Regulations

In line with Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar's manifesto commitment to regulate fishing, diving and other marine activities in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters (BGTW), the Government has today published the Marine Protection Regulations 2014 as well as the Tuna Preservation Regulations 2014 with the latter regulations specifically catering for the regulation of tuna fishing activities in BGTW. A number of other related enabling regulations have also been published.

The regulations form part of the wider Government strategy to protect the marine environment in Gibraltar as required under International, European and regional legislative frameworks. Both regulations are instruments of the Nature Protection Act 1991. They will allow for the regulation of fishing activities that are carried out legally in BGTW such as recreational fishing with rods and lines from land and from vessels, as well as spearfishing. Other activities carried out by sports fishing operators, recreational divers, diving operators and dolphin tour operators will also be regulated subject to the conditions of the relevant permit classes included in the new regulations. These range from permit classes A to K. A comprehensive, yet user friendly guidance booklet has been produced by the Department of the Environment to help inform members of the public on the different permit classes and the specific provisions of both regulations.

The Department of the Environment will take the role of lead authority in issuing all the necessary permits under the regulations. The Marine Protection Regulations 2014 will become effective on the 1st January 2015, but members of the public will be able to download the permit application form and submit it to the Department for processing as from Thursday 30th October 2014. The permit application form can be found online in the Department of the Environment's website (<https://www.gibraltar.gov.gi/new/departement-environment>). A new counter will be specially setup at the Department, at the Line Wall Road entrance to Duke of Kent House, to deal with the permit application and delivery

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process. In addition, a marine species identification booklet has also been produced and will be made available to all applicants to highlight some of the common fish and mollusc species found in Gibraltar along with their corresponding minimum sizes that are now enshrined in the Marine Protection Regulations 2014. Other significant measures incorporated into the legislation include a cetacean protocol, no anchoring zones, the designation of Marine Conservation Zones, where additional conditions may be applied to specific activities, and the ability to implement designated fishing seasons and yearly quotas for species requiring additional protection such as Atlantic Bluefin tuna (*Thunnus Thynnus*). The closed season for Tuna, for example will follow the provisions of ICCAT (the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna) and run from 15 October to 15 June.

Both regulations have been subject to a lengthy consultation process encompassing a wide variety of stakeholders, including but not limited to, marine biologists, recreational anglers and divers, cottage and big game fishermen, spear fishermen, diving and dolphin tour operators and sports fishing enthusiasts.

In line with the spirit of cooperation and continued consultation, the Marine Protection Regulations 2014 also provide for the creation of a statutory Working Group chaired by the Minister for the Environment. This Working Group, which will be appointed in the coming weeks, will serve as a platform to discuss relevant issues such as sustainable fishing activities in BGTW. An awareness campaign spearheaded by the Department of the Environment on sustainable fishing practices will also form part of the initiative.

Commenting on the publication of the regulations, Minister for the Environment, Dr John Cortes, said, "This has been a huge task, involving tremendous dedication from the Department's staff and wide ranging discussion with many people, to arrive at what are workable pieces of legislation that achieve the dual purposes of safeguarding the marine environment for future generations while allowing all responsible activities to continue in an organised manner. They will provide information from which to better manage our natural resources and inform the ongoing process to allow further developments in the future, if and when the time is right. The tuna regulations in particular will show the world that Gibraltar will step up to assume its international responsibilities and is well capable of being entrusted with legislating for the protection of its marine resources within the whole of BGTW, much of which falls within a European Special Area of Conservation."