

What Do I Need to Fish in Montana?

Age	Conser- vation License	AIS Prevention Pass 16 & Older	License Fee	Total Cost
0-11	No license required. Must observe all limits and regulations.			
Resident 12 - 17, 62 and older, or disabled	\$4	\$2	\$5 for 2 consecutive calendar days	\$11
			\$10.50 for season	\$16.50
Resident 18-61	\$8	\$2	\$5 for 2 consecutive calendar days	\$15
			\$21 for season	\$31
Nonresident 12 and older	\$10	\$7.50	\$25 for 2 consecutive calendar days	\$42.50
			\$56 for 10 consecutive calendar days	\$73.50
			\$86 for season	\$103.50
Resident Sportsman and Nonresident Combination licenses include a season fishing license.				

A valid fishing license (see license requirements table above) is required for all types of fishing on state waters. To fish in Montana, most anglers need a Conservation License and a Fishing License, and also an AIS Pass, see table above. You must have your fishing license in your possession while fishing. A license on your smart phone is acceptable.

A Conservation License is needed before you can buy any fishing or hunting license that FWP. Conservation License applicants are required to provide the last four digits of their social security number in addition to the information usually requested. A valid driver's license or a valid photo ID is required to purchase a license.

A fishing license allows a person to fish for and possess any fish or aquatic invertebrate authorized by the state's fishing regulations. It is nontransferable and nonrefundable. The license enables one to fish from March 1 through the end of February of the following year.

The AIS Prevention Pass is required for all individuals who fish in Montana. This new program initiated by the 2017 Montana Legislature and signed into law by Gov. Steve Bullock is helping fund the fight against aquatic invasive species in Montana.

Resident Licenses: To qualify for a resident license, a person must meet the criteria set out in MCA 87-2-102 and 202. To be a legal resident eligible to purchase a resident fishing license, you must have physically been living in Montana for at least 180 consecutive days (six months) immediately before purchasing any resident license; you must file Montana state income tax returns as a resident, if you are required to file; you must have registered your vehicles in Montana; if you are registered to vote, you must be registered in Montana; and you may not possess or apply for any resident hunting, fishing or trapping privileges in another state or country. At the time of purchase, a person must present a valid Montana driver's license, a valid Montana driver's examiner's identification card, or a tribal identification card. If unsure of your residency status, contact a regional FWP office.

Special Fishing Licenses

Paddlefish: All anglers must purchase a Paddlefish tag to fish for Paddlefish. To purchase a tag, all anglers must have a valid Conservation License, an AIS Prevention Pass and the required Fishing License. Limit of one Paddlefish tag (one fish) per person: **Resident - \$6.50 each Nonresident - \$15 each**

Paddlefish harvest only tags will be available via lottery draw (\$5 drawing fee) for the Upper Missouri River Paddlefish season (White Tag) only. Anglers need to apply individually or as a party (up to five people) before 5pm March 27, 2020. See page 82 for specifics on the Upper Missouri Paddlefish drawing.

Bull Trout: Hungry Horse Reservoir, Lake Koocanusa and part of the South Fork Flathead River are open for a regulated and experimental Bull Trout angling season. When fishing for Bull Trout each angler must have in possession a valid Bull Trout Catch Card for the specific water he/she is fishing. Anglers may select only one of the following areas: A) Lake Koocanusa, or B) Hungry Horse Reservoir and South Fork Flathead River. Swan Lake is open to angling for Bull Trout without a special permit but no harvest is allowed. All other waters are closed to intentional angling for Bull Trout year around.

Catch Cards are free of charge and are available at the FWP Region One office in Kalispell and at the US Forest Service Spotted Bear Ranger Station. Applications for a catch card are available at the FWP Region One office or online at fwp.mt.gov/fish/license/. Completed applications must be presented at the regional headquarters or mailed to FWP Bull Trout Permit, 490 North Meridian, Kalispell MT 59901.

Free Fishing Weekend Fathers Day June 20-21, 2020.

By Montana law, each year on Father's Day weekend any person (resident or non-resident) may fish for any fish within this state without obtaining a fishing license as long as they abide by the seasons, restrictions and bag limits listed in these Fishing Regulations. The two exceptions to this are Paddlefish and Bull Trout fishing, both of which require the purchase of a Conservation and Fishing License. Fishing for Paddlefish also requires a Paddlefish tag. A catch card is required to fish for Bull Trout.

Montana Resident With Disability: Montana FWP seeks to ensure that its programs, services and activities are accessible to persons with disabilities. Montana FWP provides many representative recreational opportunities. To learn more or to request modifications or accommodations relative to a disability, contact the FWP office at 406-444-2449.

- Resident Person With a Disability must purchase a **Conservation License - \$4**, an **AIS Prevention Pass - \$2** and a **Fishing License - \$10.50**. To qualify a person must be permanently and substantially disabled. Applications are available on the FWP website however, they can only be certified at a regional FWP or by mail.
- Lifetime Fishing License for the Blind - \$10 plus an annual \$2 AIS Prevention Pass. Visit the FWP website for an application.

Veterans Administration Patients: Permits are available for patients residing at VA Hospitals and residents of State institutions, except the State penitentiary. These free permits are available on-site at the VA hospital or State institution. Contact 406-444-2452.

Legion of Valor: A Conservation License allows both residents and nonresidents, regardless of age, to fish. Legion of Valor membership card required to qualify. Available only at FWP offices.

Care Facility: The manager or director of an eligible facility licensed in Montana may apply for permission to take supervised residents fishing during activities approved by the facility. Licensed facilities include long-term care, personal care, home for persons with developmental disabilities and home for persons with severe disabilities. Contact 406-444-2452.

Education Exemptions: Free fishing license exemptions are available for qualified educational events and fishing clinics. For information on these free educational exemptions, call 406-444-9943.

Purple Heart: Residents who have been awarded a Purple Heart, regardless of age, may fish and hunt upland game birds with a conservation license issued by the Department.

- Nonresidents who have been awarded a Purple Heart, regardless of age, may fish and hunt upland game birds with a conservation license issued by the Department during expeditions arranged by a nonprofit organization that uses fishing and hunting as part of rehabilitation.
- Verification of Purple Heart and DD 214 Form required to qualify. Residents only available at FWP offices. Nonresidents only available at FWP Headquarters in Helena.

Penalties for Violations of the Law

Most fish and game violations are misdemeanors that are punishable by a fine not to exceed \$1,000 and imprisonment for not longer than six months. The court may also order the forfeiture of any current hunting, fishing and trapping licenses and the privilege to hunt, fish and trap, or use state lands for recreational purposes for a period set by the court.

Taking an over limit of fish will result in a fine plus restitution to the state for each fish over the limit. Restitution for Bull Trout may be up to \$500 per fish and for river Arctic Grayling, White Sturgeon, and Paddlefish restitution is \$300 per fish.

It is Unlawful and a Misdemeanor

- To violate any regulations listed in this booklet.
- To introduce any fish or viable fish eggs into any waters without FWP permission.
- To refuse to show one's fishing license upon demand.
- To refuse to show one's fish upon demand.
- To loan or transfer your fishing license or tags to any person.
- To sell game fish except as prescribed by F&W Commission regulations.
- To leave or dump any dead animal, fish, garbage or litter in or on any state, federal or private property where public recreation is permitted.
- To stun or kill fish by using any carbide, lime, giant powder, dynamite, or other explosive compounds, or any corrosive or narcotic poison. To possess these substances within 100 feet of any stream where fish are found is unlawful.
- To hire or retain an unlicensed outfitter or guide.
- To waste any part of game fish suitable for food (see Waste of Fish or Game definition on page 93).

Penalties of Unlawful Introductions

- Fines of \$2,000 up to \$10,000 and imprisonment for up to one year.
- Liability for all costs to eliminate or mitigate the effects of the violation.
- Loss of hunting, fishing and trapping privileges for at least 5 years.

Montana Stream Access Law: Under the Montana Stream Access Law, the public may use rivers and streams for recreational purposes up to the ordinary high water marks. Although the law gives recreationists the right to use rivers and streams for water-related recreation, it does not give them the right to enter private lands bordering those streams or to cross private lands to gain access to streams without landowner permission.

FWP recommends that recreationists obtain landowner permission to cross private land to access a stream. Complete rules are available at any FWP office.

Montana Trespass Law: Montana's trespass law states that a member of the public has the privilege to enter private land only:

- With the explicit permission of the landowner or his/her agent, or
- When the landowner has failed to post a no-trespassing notice or mark legal accesses with 50 square inches of orange.

General Information For Anglers

Catch-and-Release Angling: Waters designated catch-and-release for one or more species of fish require that those fish be immediately released alive. Before you start fishing in these waters, consider the following in order to give the fish you release the best possible chance to survive: 1) Artificial lures are preferred over bait to reduce deep hooking and catch-and-release mortality; 2) Single hooks are preferred over treble or multiple hooks because they are easier and quicker to remove; 3) Barbless hooks are recommended over barbed hooks because they are easier to remove and reduce release time; 4) Heavier gear is preferred over lighter gear because it makes

it easier to land fish; and 5) Rubber or neoprene nets are preferable because they are less likely than nylon nets to catch hooks which increases release time.

Fishing From Boats/Vessels, Float Fishing and Float Outfitting are regulated on some rivers and streams (see District Exceptions for regulated waters). These regulations apply as follows:

- When a water is closed to **“Fishing From Boats/Vessels,”** an angler may not fish while on any boat or vessel. However, an angler may use a boat or vessel to access wade fishing opportunities. The angler must be completely out of the boat or vessel while wade fishing.
- When a water is closed to **“Float Fishing,”** an angler may not fish from a boat or vessel, and may not wade fish in the river or stream, or from the bank or shoreline of the river or stream, when fishing access is gained by boat or vessel.
- When a water is closed to **“Float Outfitting,”** the operation of any boat or vessel for the commercial purpose of float fishing by a fishing outfitter or fishing guide is prohibited.

River Etiquette

- Be aware that boat access areas can be busy places; you may wish to fish in a location that is less congested.
- Do not encroach on another angler’s space. Use the “visual rule of crowding” and attempt to keep out of sight of other anglers, if at all possible.
- Try not to monopolize a good fishing spot on the river. Fish for a while, then move on.
- Boats should always yield to wade anglers, however, there are instances when the wading angler should yield to floaters, such as when there is no other channel for the floaters to navigate.
- When possible, avoid using the streambed as a pathway. This type of foot traffic can cause damage to the fragile aquatic habitat. Anglers should use the shoreline to travel from one point to the other, if doing so doesn’t violate trespass and stream access laws.

Fishing Methods: Fish may be taken only by hook and line or other approved methods. Regulations for the taking of fish are listed in the standard regulations for each fishing district (see pages 21, 49 & 76).

Releasing Fish

To ensure a released fish has the best chance for survival:

- Play the fish as rapidly as possible. Do not play it to total exhaustion.
- Keep the fish in water as much as possible when handling and removing the hook.
- Remove the hook gently. Do not squeeze the fish or put your fingers in its gills. There are release devices available from most sporting/fishing stores to assist you, and the use of barbless hooks makes releasing fish easier.
- Set the hook quickly to avoid deep hooking the fish. If the fish is deeply hooked and must be released by regulation, cut the line inside the mouth opening. Do not yank the hook out, as some fish will survive with hooks in them. Anglers should strongly consider keeping fish deeply-hooked in the throat or gills if allowed by regulations on that waterbody.
- Release the fish only after it has gained its equilibrium. If necessary, gently hold the fish upright in the current facing upstream and move it slowly back and forth.
- Release the fish in quiet water close to the area where it was hooked.

Lake/Reservoir fishing from boats:

- Fish caught from deep water may be unable to vent their air bladder and may “bloat.” Puncturing the air bladder or “fizzing” is not recommended because it may cause infections. A simple release tool will facilitate releasing the fish in deep water and recompressing it quickly. All you need is a 50-foot cord, a weight and a hook. Dull the hook, flatten the barb and attach the hook inline just above the weight with knots at the hook eye and bend. The hook should be pointing down toward the weight. Place the hook over the lower jaw of the fish and let the weight drop, pulling the fish down rapidly. A tug on the cord will release the fish.

Disposal of Dead Fish and Fish Entrails: When you are in a boat on the water and fishing, it is acceptable to dispose of fish entrails in deep water in the lake, reservoir or river. When you are near or on the shore or bank, it is recommended that you bag all fish remains and dispose of the bag in an appropriate garbage receptacle. Help keep the shoreline clean for others. It is unlawful to discard game fish; however, dead non-game fish may be treated like fish entrails for disposal purposes (puncture the bladder first so the fish will sink).

Check Stations: Anglers and hunters are required to stop as directed at all designated check stations on the way to and from fishing and hunting areas, even if they have no fish or game to be checked.

Family Fishing Waters: Numerous waters across the state provide excellent fishing opportunities for young anglers. A few waters have been set aside exclusively for the use of young anglers. Waters posted as Family Fishing Waters are open to fishing during the entire year to persons 14 years of age and younger only with the exception of Indian Road Pond near Townsend (see District Exceptions). One rod allowed per child. There are 64 Family Fishing Waters in Montana. Check the FishMT tab on the FWP website for all Family Fishing Waters.

Federal Wildlife Refuges: Certain waters on Federal Wildlife Refuges may have special rules. Specific information may be obtained from the headquarters of the federal refuge involved.

Measuring Fish: Measure the greatest length from the tip of the nose to the tip of the tail. Place the fish on a flat surface and squeeze the lobes of the tail fin together so as to achieve the greatest length. Do not measure over the curve of the body.

Tagged Fish: It is legal to harvest a radio tagged fish, however, the radio tag must be returned to FWP. If you catch a tagged fish, please report the following information to any Fish, Wildlife & Parks office or online at fwp.mt.gov/fish/anglingData/taggedFishForm.html

1. The tag's number and color;
2. The date the fish was caught;
3. The species of the fish;
4. The fish's length and weight (close as possible);
5. Location of the catch (the body of water and distance from nearest landmark);
6. Whether the fish was kept or released; and
7. The name and address of the angler.

Thank You Anglers And Motorboaters!

The Sport Fish Restoration (SFR) Program provides grant funding to all state fish and wildlife agencies for fishery projects, boating access, and aquatic education. The Program is authorized by the Sport Fish Restoration Act of 1950, also known as the Dingell-Johnson Act in recognition of the original bill sponsors. Annually, FWP receives in excess of \$8 million in SFR funds.

The SFR Program was created to assist states with restoration and management of our nations fisheries, and was modeled after the successful Wildlife Restoration Program of 1937. Funding for the Program comes from tax revenues collected from the sale of fishing equipment, motorboat and small engine fuels.

Every time you purchase fishing equipment or fuel for your boat, you are supporting fisheries management and motorboat access programs in Montana.

The SFR Program represents one of the most successful user-pay, user-benefit programs in the nation.



Other Statewide Permit Requirements and Laws

State School Trust Lands: Your conservation license provides anglers, hunters and trappers access to legally accessible State School Trust Lands for fishing and hunting. Other recreational activities such as hiking and bird watching still require the \$10 state lands recreational use permit. These activities cannot, by Federal statute, be covered by the conservation license. Additional information regarding the rules, regulations, and restrictions governing these activities is available from FWP or contact DNRC at 406-444-2074.

- On lands outside designated campgrounds there is a 2-day camping limit.
- Motorized travel is only allowed on public roads or on designated roads.
- No open fires are allowed except in designated campground fire pits. Contained mechanical heat sources are allowed.

Aquatic Invertebrates - Crayfish/Mussels: A valid fishing license is required to harvest crayfish for personal use (see "License/Permit Requirements" for specific license requirements). Crayfish may be taken in traps no larger than 24x12x12 inches. Freshwater mussel harvest or possession is prohibited in the Western and Central Fishing Districts. Mussels may be harvested for personal use in the Eastern Fishing District only. No fishing license is required to harvest mussels.

Commercial Collection of Aquatic Invertebrates and Mussels: Persons wishing to collect aquatic invertebrates (such as leeches and aquatic insects) for sale or commercial distribution should contact their regional FWP office for information. In accordance with the Administrative Rules of Montana, Section 12.2.501, it is unlawful to take or possess freshwater mussels or their shells for sale or commercial distribution.

Commercial Fishing Licenses

Bait Fish Seining: Commercial Harvest, \$10 Fee

- Contact regional FWP offices for a Bait Fish Seining License and a list of waters open to commercial seining: \$10 fee per year.
- A bait fish seining license is required:
 - For persons 15 years of age or older to seine for or trap and transport bait fish for commercial purposes in Montana;
 - For any person who seines or traps for or has in his/her possession more than 24 dozen non-game bait fish.
- Non-game bait fish (Fathead Minnow, Flathead Chub, Western Silvery Minnow, Plains Minnow, Emerald Shiner, Longnose Dace, Lake Chub, Creek Chub, Longnose, Sucker, and White Sucker) may be harvested commercially and transported in accordance with Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) Section 12.7.201-12.7.206. See pages 94-95 for live bait fish identification. Live bait fish or leeches may not be imported into Montana for commercial or other purposes unless authorized by FWP. Bait fish may not be exported without FWP authorization. Call 406-452-6181 or go online at fwp.mt.gov for more information.

Commercial Whitefish Fishing: A permit is required to sell Whitefish.

- **Hook and Line Permits:** Whitefish may be taken by hook and line for sale in the following waters--Flathead Lake north of the Flathead Reservation boundary, Flathead River north of Flathead Lake, Fisher River, Kootenai River, and Whitefish Lake.
- **Net/Seine Permits:** Whitefish may be taken from the Kootenai River and tributaries (within one mile of the Kootenai River). Application required; fee is \$200 plus a \$1,000 bond per year.

Fishing Contests: A permit from FWP is required for most fishing contests. Contact your local FWP office for information and an application or download an application from the FWP website.

Hoop Net Fishing Permit: A permit is required to use hoop nets. Permits are only available in the Eastern Fishing District. Contact FWP offices in Billings, Glasgow or Miles City for information.

Import Permits for Fish: A permit is required to import live fish into Montana. Contact the FWP Fish Health Lab in Great Falls at 406-452-6181 or download an application from the FWP website.

Indian Reservations and Tribal Lands: Certain waters on Indian Reservations and Tribal Lands may have special rules and permits. Specific information should be
Visit fwp.mt.gov/fish 89

obtained from Reservation headquarters.

- The State of Montana and Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes have entered into a cooperative agreement on the Flathead Reservation. A tribal permit is required to fish on waters within the exterior boundary of the Reservation. Call tribal headquarters at 406-675-2700 for information.
- The State of Montana and the Fort Peck Tribes have entered into a cooperative agreement on the Fort Peck Reservation. A tribal permit is required to fish on waters within the exterior boundary of the reservation. Call tribal headquarters at 406-768-5305 for information.
- A State of Montana fishing license is required to fish on the Bighorn River inside the boundaries of the Crow Reservation. A tribal permit is not required.

National Parks: Certain waters within National Parks have special rules. Specific information may be obtained from the park headquarters. For Glacier National Park, call 406-888-7800 and for Yellowstone National Park, call 307-344-7381.

Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs): Residents - OHVs (ATV, UTV, Dirtbike) must be registered and display a current Off-Highway decal to be used for off-road recreation on public lands (trails, frozen lakes, reservoirs) and a two year \$20 Resident Trail Pass for use on designated roads and trails. To be used on roads (County, state highways, etc.), an OHV must have a license plate and street-legal modifications. Register your OHV with the County Treasurer. **Nonresidents** - OHVs registered in another state must purchase a nonresident permit to operate (anywhere) in Montana. North Dakota residents are exempt. Permits are good for one calendar year, cost \$35 and can be purchased from local vendors (stateparks.mt.gov, OHV Program) or online at app.mt.gov/als. Contact Montana State Parks OHV Program at 406-444-3750 with questions.

Private Fish Ponds - License Requirements, \$10 application fee: A person who owns or lawfully controls a private fish or ornamental pond may obtain a license from FWP to stock the pond with fish. Only lawfully purchased fish may be planted. Contact your local FWP office for more information and an application or download the application from the FWP website. No fishing license is required to fish on licensed, privately stocked fish ponds. Fishing license requirements apply to all other ponds and/or waters on private land.

Koi and goldfish ponds must be registered with FWP. Registration forms are available online at myfwp.mt.gov/fwpub/koiPond or from all FWP offices. There is no fee for registering a pond.

Unattended Fishing Devices: Any unattended fishing device (crayfish traps, minnow traps, fish traps, setlines, etc.) must have the angler's name and phone number or ALS# attached to it.

Motorboat and Vessel Restrictions

The use of vessels and motors may be restricted on some waters. A complete, updated, copy of the Montana Boating Laws is available from any FWP office, or by calling 406-444-2535. Additional restrictions may be posted at access points to specific waters. Contact the County Sheriff's office or federal agency where you will be boating to find out if additional restrictions are in effect.

All passengers under the age of 12 must wear a personal floatation device (PFD) at all times when the motorboat or vessel is in motion if the motorboat or vessel is less than 26 feet long. A wearable, U.S. Coast Guard approved PFD must be available for each occupant. Children 12 years of age or younger may not operate a motorboat or a personal watercraft (jet skis, water bikes, etc. that use a motor or engine to power a water jet pump as the primary source of propulsion and that is designed to be operated by a person standing or kneeling on the vessel) powered by a motor rated at more than 10 horsepower unless accompanied by someone 18 years of age or older. Youths 13 and 14 may not operate those vessels without possessing a valid Montana motorboat operator's safety certificate or evidence of completing an approved water safety course, unless accompanied by someone 18 years of age or older. A home-study boating course is available from FWP.

Sailboats 12 feet long and longer, and all motorboats and personal watercraft must be registered and numbered. Non-motorized sailboats less than 12 feet long and manually propelled boats, regardless of length, are exempt from registration and taxation. Also exempt are a vessel's lifeboat, government-owned boats, and properly

registered boats from out-of-state or country that will not be in Montana for more than 90 consecutive days.

No-Wake Zones on Lakes – Western Fishing District Only

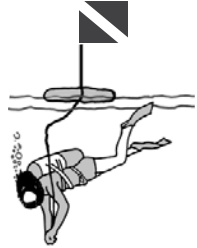
All watercraft operating on public lakes and reservoirs of 35 surface acres or less within the Western Fishing District are limited to no-wake speed. The Montana Boating Laws booklet contains a complete list of these lakes. Contact your local FWP office for a copy.

All watercraft operating on public lakes and reservoirs greater than 35 surface acres within the Western Fishing District are limited to no-wake speed from the shoreline to 200 feet from the shoreline. No-wake speed is defined as a speed whereby there is no “white” water in the track or path of the vessel or in waves created next to the vessel.

General Boating Restrictions

- Do not anchor a vessel in a position that obstructs a passageway ordinarily used by others.
- Do not operate a vessel within:
 - 20 feet of a designated swimming area marked by white and orange buoys.
 - 50 feet of a swimmer in the water except for boats towing water skiers.
 - 75 feet of an angler or a waterfowl hunter unless it is unavoidable. If unavoidable, travel at no wake speed or at the minimum speed necessary to maintain upstream progress.
 - 200 feet of a diver's flag.
- Motorboats and vessels 16 feet and longer (except canoes and kayaks) must also have a throwable type IV PFD on board.
- It is unlawful to operate or be in actual physical control of a motorboat while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- All motorboats and vessels must carry equipment as required by the Montana Boating Laws.

Boaters: This flag means there are scuba divers in the area. Montana law requires that motorboats stay at least 200 feet away from a **DIVER DOWN** flag. Violators may be subject to a fine of \$500 or 6 months imprisonment, or both. MCA 23-2-525.



Definitions

ANGLING/FISHING: Angling or fishing means to capture or attempt to capture fish, or the act of a person possessing any instrument, article or substance for the purpose of taking fish in any location that a fish might inhabit.

ARTIFICIAL LURE: Any man-made lure (including flies) that imitates natural bait. Artificial lures may have a scent infused or applied. Artificial lures do not include fish eggs, any natural or artificial food such as corn and marshmallows, any products that are derivatives of natural foods, any chemically treated or processed natural bait such as salted minnows, nor any artificial dough, paste or edible baits.

ATTENDED LINE: A line with/without a pole held in hand or under immediate control. When used through the ice, the angler need not be in immediate control but must be in the vicinity and in visual contact with the line.

CALENDAR DAY: A 24-hour period from midnight to midnight.

DAILY LIMIT: The number of fish that may be legally taken during a calendar day. A fish when landed and not immediately released becomes part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking the fish even if the fish is donated to another person. If you receive fish from another angler, those fish also become part of your daily limit.

DRAINAGE: All of the waters comprising a watershed, including tributary rivers, streams, sloughs, ponds and lakes that contribute to the water supply of the watershed.

DRESSED FISH: A fish which has been cleaned by removing the entrails. Dressed fish also may be filleted and/or have their head, gills and scales removed.