

Guidelines from “the Pier Guide” for successful fishing at the Bokeelia Fishing Pier.

Here are few items you’ll need to bring with you.

- **Food and drink:** You can purchase drinks and hot and cold food from Capt Con’s restaurant located a few steps from the pier. The restaurant opens at 11am, earlier in season for breakfast. You are welcome to bring a cooler to the pier but please note there’s no place to cook or heat your food, burners and cookers are not allowed. Oh and no glass on the pier.
- **Sun Shade:** Hats and sun shirts are essential, and rain coat for summer. The Florida heat shouldn’t be taken lightly and it’s best to prepare.
- **Sunblock:** the preferred types are the creams, pump style sprays or sticks as the aerosol type tends to spray the other customers downwind of where you are!
- **Bug repellents:** as the sun goes down during the warmer months there’s a good chance for biting bugs such as Mosquitos and No-See-ums; cover up, use bug repellent, and remember if you get the bug repellent on your hands don’t put them in your shrimp bucket, the repellent’s will kill your shrimp!
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What to fish for?

Fish species at the pier - Snook, Redfish, Tarpon, Cobia and Grouper, Snapper, Sheepshead, Pompano, Mackerel and not forgetting Sea Trout. As well as Whiting, Jack Cravelle, Ladyfish, Grunts, Squirrel Fish, Sand Perch, Lizard Fish and Puffer Fish. Sharks in all their guises, from small Bonnet Heads to Bulls and Hammerheads.

We are spoiled at the pier, there are essentially two seasons. The warmer months and the cooler months.

- **Warmer months:** Starting around March/April and through to around November/December you’ll see Snapper, Redfish, Black Drum and Redfish and the prized Snook, not to mention Pompano, Mackerel and Sharks of all varieties.
- **Cooler months:** Winter Months we see more Sheepshead, Blackdrum and Grouper. The Snook and Redfish are around but become a little shy.
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How to catch them?

- **Castnet** – We sell bait on the pier but you are welcome to catch your own. Using a cast net is a good way to catch your own bait, please don’t throw the castnet where people are fishing. Between the gates and Dockmaster hut is where you’ll be allowed to throw. Please clean the pier of any sea grass or fish that are not used. Nothing worse than slipping on dead fish.
- **Rods** - should be 6ft 6 inches to 8ft in length, Medium or Medium heavy on the 8 to 20lb range. The rule of the pier is one rod per person, but if space permits we will allow a second line, please check with the **dockmaster**.
- **Reel** - 2500 to 4000.

- **Line** - Use a Fluorocarbon or monofilament Leader of 10lb - 20lb strength about 2 foot in length to your main line.

Now you'll need **Bait**, live, dead or artificial.

Shrimp or small bait fish such as Greenbacks, pin fish or glass minnows.

Shrimp: The catch- all bait of the pier. You can buy live shrimp and small bait fish from us on the pier or several bait shops in the area. Note: in the summer we don't always carry shrimp due to the heat and availability, best to call ahead to check.

Sabiki rigs - These ingenious little rigs are perfect for catching a variety of different bait fish, just tip the hooks with small pieces of shrimp or squid (no bigger than a dime size.)

You can also use a small hook #4 with pieces of shrimp or squid and a large pinch weight and cast out near the shallows. A great way for younger kids to keep engaged as they will catch on pretty much every cast!

With same principle you will catch: Snook, Redfish, Tarpon, Cobia and grouper. Add a decent size weight to get your bait down 4oz egg or pyramid weight; you'll want larger hooks 2/0 to 7/0 and heavier leader 30/lb to 50lb plus stiffer rods 10 -30lb ranger. Bigger baits will be the key; large pinfish, ladyfish, Lizardfish, big greenbacks and threadfins. Try a chunk of ladyfish or mullet.

Snapper – Fish close to the pier, #1 or 1/0 hook (Circle hook).

Pompano – These powerful and tasty fish can be caught with pompano jigs or jigheads with shrimp. 20lb leader and rods and reels like for snapper fishing, normally caught at the far ends of the pier.

Mackerel – These toothy fast fish are really fun to catch, I like to use a bobber with greenback or shrimp, use a heavy leader such as 40lb/50lb or a light wire leader as they are renowned for biting through line. Using a spool or small jerk bait is a great way to catch them, fast retrieve is the key. Casting out and far ends of the pier.

Sea Trout – Caught in the shallows or Flats, casting out closer to the gates, bobber or free lined shrimp or greenbacks, 20lb leader and 1/0 hook. A jighead with a paddletail swimbait or small lure such as Mirrodine will also work.

Sheepshead- Fish the same techniques as snapper only replace the baitfish with small crabs. Fiddler crabs are prized bait for Sheepshead.

Sharks - Often caught at the pier, they can range in size from 12 inches to 12 feet and will eat as big a bait that is presented on very heavy mono 200 to 600lb or single or stranded wire and hooks from 7/0 up 22/0. Sharks like Bonnet head, Blacktip and Spinner Sharks are good table fare, others are protected. New FWC regulations came into effect July 1, 2019. If you are shark fishing it is required to have a Shore based shark fishing permit, available at www.myfwc.com/sharks .

Tarpon and Goliath Groupers are often hooked at the Pier, the larger ones if caught they cannot be taken out of the water as it puts a huge amount of strain and stress on them. Walking them to the shallows to unhook and release is the best way; a long de-hooker or cutting the line as close as you can to the hook will do if needed.

Please ensure that you follow the FWC (Florida Fish and Wildlife commission) Rules and regulations on harvesting sharks and other fish. If in doubt check with the dockmaster and release.

We look forward to seeing you on the pier,

“Tight Lines”