



Crabbing Regulations

MORE ABOUT CRAB TRAPS

- Crab traps may not be tended or checked from one half hour after legal sunset to one half hour before legal sunrise.
- Crabbers must place traps so vessels can safely navigate, and not set in navigable channels or at entrances to streams. Keep our waters clean and bring broken or unserviceable traps on shore.
- All traps must be marked to show ownership, with a plastic bait box cover or a 2-inch stainless steel, self-locking tag attached. Either must be legibly engraved or embossed with the commercial fisherman's license number. Each trap on a trotline shall be registered with LDWF, with a tag showing the fisherman's license number.
- All crab traps must be marked with a solid float, 6 inches in diameter or greater, attached with a non-floating line 1/4-inch minimum diameter or larger, except in certain areas inward of the saltwater line.
- Each crab trap must have at least 2 escape rings, 2-5/16 inches in inside diameter. Rings must be placed on the vertical outside walls flush with the trap floor or baffle, with one ring located in each chamber of the trap. Except from April 1 - June 30 and from Sept. 1 - Oct. 31, escape rings shall not be obstructed to hamper or prevent the exit of crabs. Beginning November 15, 2017: each trap must have 3 escape rings, each measuring 2-3/8 inches or larger, with at least 2 located in the upper chamber; and escape rings will be required in Lake Pontchartrain.

CRABS ARE A STAPLE OF AMERICAN SEAFOOD FARE. Blue crabs in particular are plentiful throughout coastal Louisiana and represent a significant portion of the state's commercial seafood industry.

There are some specific regulations commercial crabbers must follow, as set forth by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries (LDWF).

Seasons

Crab season is open year-round. However, LDWF may prohibit the use of crab traps in state waters up to a 16 consecutive-day period between February 1 and March 31 as well as up to a 14 consecutive-day period during the spring that includes the opening day of the inshore shrimp season, to remove derelict crab traps.

Harvest Methods

Crabs can be taken with any legal crab trap, crab drop net, trawl, skimmer net, butterfly net, trotline, handline, bushline, dip net or cast net—dredges are not allowed. Trawls, skimmer nets and butterfly nets may only be used for commercial crabbing during the open shrimp season, using a legal net size.

Size and Possession Limits

Hard shell blue crabs must be at least 5 inches measured from point to point of the upper shell. Blue crabs held for processing as soft shell crabs are excluded from this size limit. Hard shell crabs under the minimum size limit are to be returned to the waters from which they were taken. There is no possession limit for blue crabs that meet the size requirements.

Pre-molt crabs under the 5 inch size limit and held for processing as soft shell crabs may be harvested but must be kept in a separate container marked "peelers" or "busters". Pre-molt crabs must be no further than having a white line on the back paddle fin.

It is illegal to take or sell adult female crabs in the berry or sponge stage (i.e., carrying the eggs or young attached to the abdomen); they should be returned immediately to the water.

However, a commercial fisherman may have in his/her work box an incidental take of crabs in the berry stage equal to not more than 2 percent of the total number of crabs in his/her possession.

Stone crabs may be harvested for the claws only and once removed, the crabs must be returned to the waters from which they were taken; however, no more than one whole stone crab per crate of blue crabs may be possessed as incidental take. The minimum claw length is 2 3/4 inch forearm, measured from the immovable, anterior-most tip of the claw to the base of the joint.



NEW ENTRANTS INTO THE BLUE CRAB FISHERY If you did not hold a commercial crab trap gear license for at least two years between 2011 and 2014, there are new requirements in place to get a crab trap gear license in 2015, through the Louisiana Fisheries Forward program. Contact LDWF for more information. [View the full commercial crab fishing regulations at http://bit.ly/LDWFcrabBrochure2014](http://bit.ly/LDWFcrabBrochure2014)

