



## Crabbing Regulations

**C**RABS ARE A STAPLE OF AMERICAN SEAFOOD FARE. Blue crabs in particular represent a significant portion of the state's commercial seafood industry. Following is a basic overview of Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries (LDWF) commercial crab regulations.

### Seasons

Crab season is normally open year-round; however the commercial harvest of female blue crabs is prohibited March 1 through April 30 in 2018 and 2019. LDWF may also prohibit the use of crab traps for two-week periods during February and March for derelict trap clean-up; and again during the opening of spring inshore shrimp season.

### 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

There is no possession limit for hard shell blue crabs that are at least 5 inches, as measured from point to point of the upper shell. For a three-year period beginning in 2017, it is illegal to harvest immature females regardless of size. Any undersized and immature female crabs must be returned to the waters from which they were taken.

Pre-molt (soft shell) crabs under the 5 inch size limit 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 harvest 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 keep an incidental take of berry or immature female crabs, or any females during the closure, of no more than 2 percent in his/her work box.

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; no more than one whole stone crab per crate of blue crabs may be harvested. 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.



### 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 with the commercial fisherman's license number to show ownership, with a plastic bait box cover or a 2-inch stainless steel, self-locking tag attached. Each trap on a trotline shall be registered with LDWF.
- 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 trap must have 3 escape rings, each measuring 2-3/8 inches or larger, with at least 2 located in the upper chamber; escape rings will be required in Lake Pontchartrain. 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 thru June 30 and from Sept. 1 thru Oct. 31, escape rings shall not be obstructed.



**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, through the Louisiana Fisheries Forward program. Contact LDWF for more information.

View commercial crab fishing regulations at <http://wlf.louisiana.gov/fishing/commercial-crab>

