





## IOWA COMMERCIAL FISHING LAWS

It is unlawful to use commercial gear in the taking of commercial fish and turtles from the waters of the state, except as otherwise provided by statute or administrative rules of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

### Commercial Licenses and Gear Tags

1. A person shall not use or operate commercial gear unless at least one individual at the site where the commercial gear is being operated possesses an appropriate valid commercial fishing license, or a designated operator's license. A license is valid from the date of issue to January 10 of the succeeding calendar year.
2. A commercial fisher may designate a person as a designated operator to lift and to fish with any licensed commercial fishing gear owned by the commercial fisher. A commercial fisher shall not have more than five designated operators. A designated operator's license shall be assigned to not more than three operator's during a year and a designated operator's license shall be valid for the use only by an operator who possesses the license and has signed the license. The signature of any preceding designated operator who possessed the license shall be crossed out. A designated operator shall not lift or fish any commercial fishing gear without possessing a designated operator's license which is signed by the operator. A designated operator's license that is not signed by the operator, who is in possession of the license, will be forfeited to the state.
3. A boundary water annual sport trotline license the licensee to use a maximum of four trotlines with 200 hooks in the aggregate. All boundary water sport trotlines shall be tagged with the name and address of the licensee on a metal tag affixed above the waterline. **A BOUNDARY WATER ANNUAL SPORT TROTLINE LICENSE IS NOT A COMMERCIAL LICENSE.**
4. Commercial fishers and turtle fishers shall purchase gear tags from the department to be affixed to each piece of gear in use. Notwithstanding the fee rates for gear tags listed, the minimum fee for a gear tag is \$5. All tags are valid for 10 years from the date of issue. In addition to the gear tags, all gear shall be tagged with a metal tag showing the name and address of the licensee and whether the gear is fish or turtle gear.
5. All numbered fish gear tags are interchangeable among the different types of commercial fish gear.

6. **Annual license fees are as follows:**

a.	<b>Commercial Fishing, resident</b>	<b>\$200</b>
b.	<b>Commercial Fishing, non-resident</b>	<b>\$400</b>
c.	<b>Designated operator, resident</b>	<b>\$50</b>
d.	<b>Designated operator, non-resident</b>	<b>\$100</b>
e.	<b>Commercial turtle, resident</b>	<b>\$50</b>
f.	<b>Commercial turtle, non-resident</b>	<b>\$100</b>
g.	<b>Boundary water sport trotline, resident</b>	<b>\$10</b>
h.	<b>Boundary water sport trotline, non-resident</b>	<b>\$10</b>

7. **Commercial fish gear tags are required on the following units of commercial fishing gear at the listed fee:**

a.	<b>Seine, resident, one gear tag for each 100 feet or fraction thereof</b>	<b>\$1</b>
b.	<b>Seine, non-resident, one gear tag for each 100 feet or fraction thereof</b>	<b>\$2</b>
c.	<b>Trammel net, resident, one gear tag for each 100 feet or fraction thereof</b>	<b>\$1</b>
d.	<b>Trammel net, non-resident, one gear tag for each 100 feet or fraction thereof</b>	<b>\$2</b>
e.	<b>Gill net, resident, one gear tag for each 100 feet or fraction thereof</b>	<b>\$1</b>
f.	<b>Gill net, non-resident, one gear tag for each 100 feet or fraction thereof</b>	<b>\$2</b>
g.	<b>Entrapment nets, resident, one gear tag per net</b>	<b>\$1</b>
h.	<b>Entrapment nets, non-resident, one gear tag per net</b>	<b>\$2</b>
i.	<b>Commercial trotline, resident, one gear tag for each 50 hooks or less</b>	<b>\$1</b>
j.	<b>Commercial trotline, non-resident, one gear tag for each 50 hooks or less</b>	<b>\$2</b>

8. **Turtle trap gear tags are not interchangeable with other commercial gear. Turtle trap gear tag fees are as follows:**

a.	<b>Commercial turtle trap, resident, (one gear tag per trap)</b>	<b>\$1</b>
b.	<b>Commercial turtle trap, non-resident, one gear tag per trap (limited to the Mississippi, Missouri, and Big Sioux rivers)</b>	<b>\$2</b>

**Tagging of Commercial Gear**

Each trotline shall have the tags affixed to one end. Each hoop net, slat net, trap net, and turtle trap shall have the appropriate tag affixed to the end nearest the pot. Each gill net and each trammel net shall have the tags affixed to the float line nearest the take-out hole. Each Seine shall have the tags affixed to one end.

**Baits**

1. It is lawful for licensed commercial fishers, designated operators, commercial turtle fishers, and licensed sport trotline fishers to pursue, take, possess and transport any commercial fish or their parts, bait fish, turtles, frogs, salamanders, leeches, crayfish or any other aquatic invertebrates for bait unless otherwise prohibited by law.
2. It is lawful to use any member of the following families as bait fish in boundary waters: cyprinidae, the minnows; catostomidae, the suckers; umbridae, the mudminnows; clupeidae, the herrings; hiodontidae, the mooneyes; amilidae, the bowfin, unless otherwise prohibited by law.
3. It is lawful to use green sunfish, *lepomis cyanellu*, and orange-spotted sunfish, *lepomis humilis*, for bait fish.
4. It is lawful to use minnow seines for taking bait in the boundary waters. Minnow seines may not exceed 50 feet in length and eight feet in depth.

**Unlawful Methods**

**It is unlawful:**

1. To use any commercial gear within 900 feet from a navigation dam on the boundary waters. In addition it is unlawful to use entanglement gear, including gill and trammel nets within 1,500 feet below each of the locks and dams on the Mississippi River.
2. To use commercial gear within 300 feet from the mouth of a tributary stream emptying into the boundary waters.
3. For a person to lift or to fish licensed commercial gear of another person, except by the licensee and the licensee's designated operators.
4. To have in one's possession game fish or other fish, or turtles, deemed illegal by other provisions of law while engaged in commercial activities. A fish caught in commercial fishing that is not lawful to possess shall be handled with wet hands and immediately released under-water with as little injury as possible.
5. To block or inhibit navigation through channels with commercial fishing gear unless a minimum of three feet of water depth is maintained over float lines of any entanglement gear or leads to trap nets. Gear shall not block over one-half the width of navigable channel if there is less than three feet of water over the gear.

**Sale of Commercial Fish**

1. A person possessing a commercial fishing license or designated operator's license may possess and sell any commercial fish or turtles or their parts, which have been lawfully taken.
2. All intrastate and interstate shipments of commercial fish or turtles must be accompanied by a label which shows the name and address of the seller and the kinds and pounds of the catches being sold. Individuals purchasing fish or turtles from a commercial fisher or turtle fisher need not possess a license.

**Reciprocity For Commercial Fishing and Commercial Turtle Fishing**

1. Reciprocal commercial fishing and commercial turtle fishing privileges are contingent upon a grant of similar privileges by the appropriate state to residents of this state.
2. The commission may negotiate commercial reciprocity agreements with other states.

**Reports Required**

All commercial fishers and commercial turtle fishers shall submit a monthly report supplying all information requested of forms furnished by the department. The department must receive reports no later than the fifteenth day of the following month. A person who violates the reporting requirements is guilty of a simple misdemeanor and may have their license revoked.

# Commercial Fishing-Mississippi River and Missouri River

Fish may be taken for commercial purposes from the Mississippi and Missouri rivers subject to the following regulations.

**Commercial Fishers license does not allow turtle harvest on inland waters.**

## Permissive Catch:

Except for channel catfish, flathead catfish and shovelnose sturgeon, which may not be taken from the MISSOURI RIVER, it shall be lawful to take with licensed commercial fishing gear the following species; carp, smallmouth buffalo, black buffalo, largemouth buffalo, channel catfish, flathead catfish, black bullhead, yellow bullhead, brown bullhead, freshwater drum, northern redhorse, silver redhorse, spotted sucker, white sucker, river carpsucker, quillback, highfin carpsucker, white amur, bighead carp, shovelnose sturgeon, longnose gar, shortnose gar, bowfin, gizzard shad, goldeye, mooneye and silver carp.

## Sturgeon and Bowfin Regulations:

The minimum fork length for shovelnose sturgeon measured from the tip of the snout to the fork of the tail is 27 inches. No shovelnose sturgeon less than 27 inches may be possessed in Iowa waters. No shovelnose sturgeon longer than 34 inches fork length may be harvested from waters of the Mississippi River bordering Wisconsin. Shovelnose sturgeon is closed to harvesting from May 16 – Oct 14. No shovelnose sturgeon may be harvested from gear set prior to midnight on October 15. Shovelnose sturgeon and bowfin must remain intact until the fish reach the final processing facility or business. For the purposes of this section, final processing facility does not include vessels or vehicles.

## Size Limits:

The minimum length limit for all catfish is 15 inches. Catfish less than 15 inches shall be returned unharmed to the water.

## Permitted Gear:

Hoop nets, trap nets (fyke nets), gill nets, trammel nets, slat nets (basket traps), seines and trotlines (setlines) may be used by licensed commercial fishers.

## Mesh Size Restrictions:

a.	Hoop nets and trap nets. An escape hole with a minimum diameter of one and one-half inches all directions shall be provided within 12 inches beyond the last hoop to the tailline.
b.	Gill nets. The webbing shall have a mesh size not less than three and one-half inches square measure.
c.	Trammel nets. The webbing shall have a mesh size not less than two inches square measure.
d.	Seines. There are no mesh size restrictions.
e.	Slat nets. An escape hole with a minimum diameter of one and one-half inches all directions shall be provided in the end opposite the throat.

## Gear Attendance:

The licensee or a designated operator must be present when lifting commercial gear. All commercial gear shall be lifted and emptied of catch at the following time intervals, except during periods of inclement weather. Inclement weather is defined as that threatening to life, health or safety.

a.	Constant attendance by the licensee or a designated operator of seines, trammel nets and gill nets is required when the gear is fished by driving, dive-seining, seining, floating or drifting methods.
b.	Hoop nets shall be attended at least once every 96 hours and slat nets at least once every 48 hours during open water conditions. Hoop nets shall be attended at least once every 20 days during the ice cover conditions.
c.	Trap nets and trotlines shall be attended at least once every 24 hours.
d.	Gill nets and trammel nets shall be attended at least once every 24 hours during open water conditions, and at least once every 96 hours during ice cover conditions.

## Commercial Fishing - Inland Waters

All commercial fishing on inland waters is conducted through a limited entry contract fishing procedure which involves competitive bidding and a public bid letting. Those interested in contract fishing should contact the fisheries bureau of the DNR for more information. Commercial fishers licensed with the state may enter into contract with owners of private water bodies for the removal of injurious fish provided approval is received from the director or staff of the department prior to any sampling or removal operations.

### **The Taking and Possession of mussels from the public waters of the state shall be limited to the following regulations:**

- Seasons:** There shall be an open season for taking mussels throughout the year. The taking of mussels is restricted to the hours between sunrise and sunset.
- Species:** Species other than those listed as threatened or endangered may be lawfully taken and possessed. Zebra mussels shall not be taken and possessed.
- Areas:** Live mussels may be harvested only from the Mississippi River and connected backwaters. Dead mussels may be harvested from all waters of the state.
- Limits:** The possession limit is 24 whole mussels or 48 shell halves. The sale of mussels or shells is not permitted. Licensed commercial fishers, licensed sport anglers, and children younger than 16 years of age may take and possess mussels.
- Methods:** Mussels may be taken by hand, pole and line, diving, and crowfoot bar not to exceed 20 feet in length.

# TURTLES

## License Requirements

A person shall not take, possess, or sell turtles from the water of the state without an appropriate license.

<b>a.</b>	A valid sport-fishing license entitles a person to take and possess a maximum of 100 pounds of live turtles or 50 pounds of dressed turtles. The sale of live or dressed turtles is not permitted with a sport fishing license.
<b>b.</b>	A commercial turtle license is required to take and possess more than 100 pounds of live or 50 pounds of dressed turtles. The holders of a commercial turtle license may sell live or dressed turtles.
<b>c.</b>	A commercial fishing license or a designated operator's license entitles fishers to operate any licensed commercial fishing gear for taking, possessing or selling turtles <b><u>from the Mississippi and Missouri rivers only.</u></b>
<b>d.</b>	An individual possessing a valid commercial turtle license may have the assistance of one unlicensed individual in the commercial taking of turtles.

## Non-Residents:

It shall be unlawful for any non-resident to take turtles in Iowa, by any method, except from the Mississippi, Missouri and Big Sioux rivers.

## Permissive Catch:

It shall be lawful to take common snapping turtles, softshells, and painted turtles. Possession of alligator snapping turtles is not permitted. The taking of turtle eggs from wild nests is prohibited.

## Methods:

The method of taking turtles shall only be by hand, turtle hook, turtle trap, licensed commercial fishing gear in the Mississippi and Missouri rivers only, and hook-and-line. Turtle traps shall be constructed with no more than one throat or funneling device. The last hoop to the tail-line of turtle traps shall have a functional escape hole provided with a minimum diameter in all directions of 7-1/2 inches to allow passage of fish and small turtles. Barrel and floating type turtle traps must have a functional escape hole below the water surface with a minimum diameter in all directions of 7-1/2 inches.

## Tags:

Any unattended gear used to take turtles shall have affixed a metal tag provided by the owner bearing the owner's name and address. In addition commercial turtle fishers shall purchase gear tags from the Department of Natural Resources as required in 1986 Iowa Acts, Chapter 1141, and affix to each turtle trap.

## Gear Attendance:

All turtle traps shall be lifted and emptied of catch at least once every 72 hours.

## Exclusions:

Chapter 482 does not apply to turtles taken and imported from outside the state. For purposes of this rule "state" does not include the boundary waters.

***For additional information regarding commercial fishing laws, license applications or report forms, contact the DNR central office address listed on the front cover.***

**IF PURCHASING A RESIDENT LICENSE, THE APPLICANT MUST MEET THE RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS OUTLINED IN THE IOWA CODE 483A.1A.**