LOUISIANA FISHERIES FORWARD
COMMERCIAL CRAB TRAP GEAR REQUIREMENTS

PROGRAM GUIDELINES DOCUMENT

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LOUISIANA FISHERIES FORWARD-COMMERCIAL CRAB GEAR REQUIREMENTS

This document only summarizes the requirements of this program. It does not supersede or in any way replace any requirements of the official rule, as defined in Louisiana Administrative Code 76:VII.347.

1) OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

Louisiana Fisheries Forward (LFF) is a multi-fishery training program designed to educate Louisiana's commercial fishing industry on the laws and procedures used to manage Louisiana's fisheries, on new and relevant technology, and on best business practices in an effort to allow everyone to make the most of Louisiana's bountiful harvest. In 2014 a new law was passed, as a response to a crab industry request requiring mandatory training for new crab fishermen. Components of the LFF were used to meet the requirements of this mandatory training.

The Louisiana Fisheries Forward Commercial Crab Gear Requirements will enable a crab fisherman to receive on the job training and occupation focused education to improve skill and competencies that meet the specific needs of the crab fisheries. The primary mission of Louisiana Fisheries Forward is to teach and inform about new and existing equipment, handling practices, technology and evolving regulations.

2) BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF LOUISIANA REVISED STATUTE 56:305.6

On June 5, 2014, The Louisiana Legislature passed Act Number 540, codified as Louisiana Revised Statute 56:305.6 which mandated Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission to establish a professionalism program for Louisiana's commercial crab industry. A summary of R.S. 56:305.6 is below.

A) Beginning November 15, 2014 you must meet one of the following criteria to qualify for a Commercial Crab Trap Gear License:
   i. **Possess a Commercial Crab Trap Gear License in any two of the years, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014.**
   ii. Complete the crab industry training program established by LDWF

B) The program must include education in the following:
   i. Proper fishing techniques necessary for the health and sustainability of the species
   ii. Proper techniques for the best capture and presentation of the crabs for marketability
   iii. Proper instructions regarding the placement, tending, and maintenance of crab traps to reduce potential conflicts with other user groups

C) The program may include an apprenticeship program component.

The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission established the Louisiana Fisheries Forward – Commercial Crab Gear Requirements to accomplish the objectives set forth in La. R.S. 56:305.6 with detailed requirements and guidelines contained in LAC 76:VII.347.

3) TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

LDWF: Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

LFF: Louisiana Fisheries Forward

Applicant: a licensed commercial fisherman attempting to obtain a Commercial Crab Trap Gear License through the program.

Mentor: an individual holding a valid Commercial Crab Trap Gear License who mentors an applicant in completing the apprentice path.

Sponsor: an individual holding a valid Commercial Crab Trap Gear License who sponsors an applicant in completing sponsorship path.

Apprenticeship Path: a training path that requires the applicant to complete a minimum of 200 hours of training related to crab fishing under supervision of the applicant's designated mentor with 100 of these hours spent actively fishing as evidence by trip tickets.

Sponsorship Path: a training path that requires the applicant to actively fish crabs under the sponsor's crab trap gear license and report trip ticket sales of crabs using the applicant's name and commercial fishermen's license number. The applicant must complete a minimum of 20 crab fishing trips, validated by trip ticket sales.

Optional Training: a training path that substitutes required apprenticeship hours and sponsorship fishing trips. (Note: a maximum of 50 apprenticeship hours or 5 sponsorship fishing trips may be substituted.)

Basic Requirements: training that applicants must complete in addition to the apprenticeship and sponsorship path requirements.

4) PROGRAM SUMMARY

Participation is required for anyone applying for a Commercial Crab Trap Gear License that did not possess one in any two of the years, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014.

A) The program consists of the following training components:
   i. Basic requirements - online courses and successful completion of a NASBLA approved boating safety class as required by R.S. 34:851.36 (Mandatory)
      Note: Vessel captains licensed by the U.S. coast Guard are exempt from the boater safety certification requirement
   ii. On the job / field component (Completion of **one of the following** options is mandatory)
      a. Apprenticeship – Applicant works directly with another fisherman (mentor) as a deck hand or helper
      b. Sponsorship – Applicant fishes another fisherman's (sponsor's) crab traps under their indirect supervision
   iii. Seminars and meetings (Optional)

B) **The entire process must be completed within one consecutive 12-month period.**

Upon completion of both the basic requirements and either the apprenticeship or sponsorship, the applicant will be become eligible to obtain a Commercial Crab Trap Gear License.

5) PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

A) **Applicant**
   i. Must possess a valid LDWF issued Louisiana commercial fisherman's license, and
   ii. Must not have been convicted of a class 3 or greater fisheries violation in the past 5 years.

B) **Mentor / Sponsor**
   i. Must possess a valid LDWF issued Louisiana commercial fisherman's license,
   ii. Must possess a valid LDWF crab trap gear license,
   iii. Must possess a minimum of six trip tickets showing crab landings in any two of the years between 2011-2014, and
   iv. Must not have been convicted of a class 3 or greater fisheries violation in the past 5 years.

6) DETAILED TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

A) Basic Requirements – Online Training
   i. Each applicant must successfully complete a NASBLA approved boating safety class as required by R.S. 34:851.36.
      a. Online via http://www.boatus.org/onlinecourse/Louisiana.asp (free of charge) or http://www.boat-ed.com/ (fee of $24.50 only upon completion)
      b. Classroom courses (free of charge, visit http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/boating/courses for course locations)
      c. If you have taken the boater's course prior to the launch of this program and your certificate is still valid, you are not required to retake this course
      d. If you are a vessel captain licensed by the U.S. Coast Guard, you are not required to complete the boater safety course as a requirement for this program
   ii. Each applicant must complete and receive a certificate in the following Louisiana Fisheries Forward online courses.
      Online courses can be taken at the following link:
      http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/crabtraining
      The applicant will be required to view the content in its entirety and score a minimum of 80% in order to receive a certificate.

      a. How to be a Commercial Fisherman - Course providing a detailed overview of state and federal statutes governing legal harvest of major seafood commodities, including but not limited to, licensing and permitting, harvest regulations, reporting requirements, and responsible and safe fishing.
      b. How to be a Crab Fisherman - Course covering the legalities and best management practices of crab fishing, including but not limited to, licensing and permitting requirements, crab harvest regulations, reporting requirements, best handling practices, responsible fishing, and vessel operation.

c. Seafood Business and Finance - Course covering fundamental financial concepts targeted to Louisiana's commercial fishing industry, including but not limited to, budgeting, cash flow, taxes, insurance, loans, grants, and business plans.
d. Best Handling Practices for Producing High Quality Seafood -Course covering the fundamental concepts for producing high quality seafood, including but not limited to, quality loss, temperature control, icing, chilling, freezing, and proper handling and storage.

B) Apprenticeship Path - The applicant must complete a minimum of 200 hours of crab fisheries apprenticeship training under supervision of the applicant's selected and approved mentor.
   i. Apprenticeship hours must be recorded using the training log forms provided by LDWF, and these forms must be submitted to LDWF quarterly.
   ii. A minimum of 100 hours must be performed and logged on days when the applicant's mentor has harvested and reported trip ticket sales of crabs.
   iii. No previous work and/or training in the crab fishery prior to the date that the apprenticeship started is allowed to count toward the applicant's total required hours (no "grandfathering").

C) Sponsorship Path - The applicant must actively fish crabs under the special crab trap permit and the sponsor's crab trap gear license and report trip ticket sales of crabs using the applicant's name and commercial fisherman's license number.
   i. The applicant must complete a minimum of 20 crab fishing trips confirmed and validated by trip tickets.
   ii. No previous work and/or training in the crab fishery prior to the date that the apprenticeship started is allowed to count toward the applicant's total required hours (no "grandfathering").

D) Optional Training - Seminars and Meetings
   i. Applicants may substitute attendance at certain department approved meetings or events for required apprenticeship hours or sponsorship trips.
      a. Eligible meetings and events include the following: Louisiana Crab Task Force meetings, crab dock days and the annual Louisiana Fisheries Summit. Additional meetings and events may be deemed eligible by LDWF. An up to date list of department approved seminars and meetings can be found at the following link: http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/crabtraining
         1. Each hour of meeting attendance will substitute for one hour of apprenticeship requirement. A maximum of 50 hours may be substituted. These hours will not substitute for the 100 hrs required to be tied to trip tickets.
         2. Every 10 hours of meeting attendance will substitute for one fishing trip of the sponsorship requirement. A maximum of 5 fishing trips may be substituted.
   ii. Attendance at meetings and/or events must be documented by a designated LDWF employee and/or agent.
      a. The applicant must sign in upon arrival, present a photo ID and provide their commercial fisherman's license number
      b. The applicant must sign out when leaving the meeting

c. Applicants will only receive credit for the time between sign in and sign out up to the full length of the meeting
d. **Applicants who fail to sign in and/or sign out will not receive credit for attending the event**

7) APPLICATION PROCESS AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The applicant must identify the individual they will be working with and whether or not they will be completing an apprenticeship or a sponsorship at the time of application.

Applicants may obtain a Louisiana Fisheries Forward application in person, by mail by contacting LDWF at 1-855-262-1764, or online at www.wlf.la.gov/crabtraining.

A) Applications may be submitted year round and may be hand delivered or mailed to:

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF)
Louisiana Fisheries Forward -- Commercial Crab Gear Requirements
P.O. Box 98000
Baton Rouge, LA 70898

It is recommended that your application documents be sent via certified mail.

B) The following information regarding the applicant and mentor/sponsor will be required to complete your application.
   i. Photo copies of driver's licenses (both applicant and mentor/sponsor)
   ii. Commercial Fisherman's license numbers (both applicant and mentor/sponsor)
   iii. Commercial Crab Trap Gear License number (mentor/sponsor only)
   iv. Social Security Numbers (both applicant and mentor/sponsor)
   v. Dates of Birth (both applicant and mentor/sponsor)
   vi. Contact Information (both applicant and mentor/sponsor)

C) Applications must be signed by both the applicant and mentor/sponsor

D) Upon submission of a complete application, the applicant and selected mentor/sponsor will be background checked for fisheries violations and validated against qualifying criteria.
   i. Applicants and mentors/sponsors that fail the fisheries violation background check or fail to meet other qualifying criteria will be notified that they are ineligible to participate in the program.
   ii. Applicants whose mentors/sponsors are deemed ineligible to participate may submit a new application with a different mentor/sponsor.
   iii. Applicants and mentors/sponsors who have pending Class 3 or greater fisheries violations will be informed that conviction of the pending violation while participating in this program may make them ineligible to complete the program.

E) Upon approval of the application, the applicant will receive an approval packet that includes the necessary information and forms to complete the program.
   i. Apprenticeship Approval Packet

a. Triplicate carbon copy log forms.
    1. Completed **white copies**—to be attached to the affidavit upon completion of the program.
    2. Completed **yellow copies**—to be submitted to LDWF quarterly to track the applicant's progress throughout the program
    3. Completed **pink copies**—to remain in the applicant's possession as a personal record of activities pertaining to the program

ii. Sponsorship Approval Packet
    a. A special crab trap permit will be included for those choosing the sponsorship path.

iii. Both the Apprenticeship and Sponsorship Approval Packets Will Also Contain:
    a. Approval Letter
    b. Lists of Approved Meeting and Events for Optional Training
    c. Diagram of Program Requirements
    d. Affidavit of Program Completion

F) Once approved, applicants will be required to report their progress as follows:
    i. Sponsorship – Submission of trip tickets documenting crab landings
    ii. Apprenticeship – Quarterly submission of the **yellow copy** of the apprenticeship hour log form.
    iii. Completion of the required training videos and NASBLA approved boating safety class does not need to be reported to LDWF. This information is automatically transferred.

G) Throughout the duration of the program LDWF will provide the applicant with quarterly progress reports detailing the basic requirement courses completed to date, the number of trips or hours and type of apprenticeship work completed, and any credit received for optional training.
    i. For applicants participating in the apprenticeship path to receive a progress report they must have submitted the required log forms quarterly.

H) Once the apprenticeship path is completed, the applicant and mentor must complete, sign, and submit a notarized affidavit that includes the original signed training log forms (**white copy**). The affidavit is provided by LDWF in the approval packet. The affidavit will indicate the completion of the apprenticeship and certify the accuracy of the training log forms.

I) Once the sponsorship path is completed, the applicant and sponsor must complete, sign, and submit a notarized affidavit that includes copies of the trip tickets that documented the required crab fishing trips. The affidavit is provided by LDWF in the approval packet. The affidavit will indicate the completion of the sponsorship and certify the accuracy of the associated trip tickets.

J) After the applicant has submitted the required affidavit and associated documentation, LDWF will perform a final review to make sure that all program requirements have been met.
    i. Applicants meeting all requirements will be immediately eligible to purchase their Commercial Crab Trap Gear License.

ii. Applicants who do not meet all the requirements will be notified by LDWF and given an opportunity to remedy the deficiency if possible.

8) ADDITIONAL RULES

A) Before beginning program training, an applicant must possess a valid Louisiana commercial fisherman's license. The license will be used to track participation in the program.

B) **All program requirements must be completed within one consecutive 12-month period.**

i. Applicants who fail to complete the process in this time frame will be required to submit a new application and will not receive credit for work completed under the failed application.

C) Special Crab Trap Permits associated with the sponsorship may only be issued once.

i. Applicants who fail to complete the sponsorship within the 12 month period of their first attempt will only be allowed to reapply under the apprenticeship path.

D) Applicants who want to change their mentor or sponsor during the training process must submit a new application containing the new mentor/sponsor's information and signature. The new application must include a written explanation for the change. Applicants will not lose credit for training program hours or fishing trips logged with the previously approved mentor/sponsor.

The applicant and mentor/sponsor must comply with all other Louisiana state and US federal seafood harvesting, processing, and reporting regulations.

If you have general questions concerning this program please contact:

Darren Bourgeois		**Jason Froeba**
504-284-2033	**or**	**225-765-0121**
dbourgeois@wlf.la.gov		jfroeba@wlf.la.gov

If you have already applied for this program and have questions specific to your application please contact LDWF Fisheries Oversight at 1-855-262-1764

Inquiries regarding license qualifications for exemption from this training should be directed to LDWF licensing at 1-225-765-2898.