

**TITLE 76**

**WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES**

**Part VII. Fish and Other Aquatic Life**

**Chapter 3. Saltwater Sport and Commercial Fishery**

**347. Louisiana Fisheries Forward Program**

A. The following defines the requirements necessary to complete the program to increase and elevate professionalism in the commercial crab industry pursuant to R.S. 56:305.6. This program shall hereafter be referred to as the Louisiana Fisheries Forward Program.

B. For the purposes of this section, the following will be defined as:

Applicant – Licensed commercial fishermen attempting to obtain a commercial crab trap gear license through the program.

Mentor – A fisherman holding a valid commercial crab trap gear license who mentors an applicant in completing the Apprenticeship Path.

Sponsor – A fisherman or wholesale/retail seafood dealer holding a valid commercial crab trap gear license who sponsors an applicant in completing Sponsorship Path.

C. Policy

1. Applicants that do not qualify for a commercial crab trap gear license

under provisions defined in R.S. 56:305.6 shall fulfill all the basic requirements and complete one of two field-training paths; the apprenticeship path, or the sponsorship path, to complete the program, and receive a crab trap gear license.

2. Before beginning a training path, an applicant must possess a valid Louisiana Commercial Fisherman's License. This license number will be used to track participation in the program.

3. The basic requirements and chosen training path shall be completed within one consecutive 12-month period.

4. Applicants who wish to change their mentor or sponsor during the process shall submit a new application containing the new mentor's or sponsor's information along with a written explanation for the change. Applicants shall not lose credit for hours or trips logged under the previous mentor or sponsor provided they are verified pursuant to paragraph F(3) & G(3) of this section.

5. In the event an applicant completes the field training path prior to the availability (release) of the required training videos, the applicant shall be issued a conditional commercial crab trap license. Completion of the field training path shall be evidenced by submission of 20 trip tickets under the sponsorship path or submission of completed log forms showing 200 hours of work under the apprenticeship path. The applicant shall be notified via certified mail when the required training videos are available. The applicant shall complete the entire program including the required video training within thirty (30) days of the date of this notice. Failure to complete the program and submit the required affidavit within thirty (30) days

shall result in the suspension of the applicant's commercial crab trap gear license.

D. Eligibility

1. Any person who has been convicted of a Class 3 or greater fisheries violation in the last five (5) years shall not be eligible to participate as an applicant, mentor, or sponsor.

2. Any person choosing to participate as a mentor shall possess a valid commercial crab trap gear license and have documented a minimum of six trip tickets showing crab landings in any two of the previous four years.

3. Any person choosing to participate as a sponsor shall possess a valid commercial crab trap gear license and have documented a minimum of six trip tickets showing crab landings as a commercial fisherman or wholesale / retail dealer in any two of the previous four years.

E. Basic Requirements

1. Each applicant must successfully complete a NASBLA approved boating safety class as required by R.S. 34:851.36.

2. Each applicant must successfully complete and receive a certificate in the following Louisiana Fisheries Forward online courses. The applicant will be required to view 100% of the content and score a minimum of 80% in order to receive a certificate.

a. 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. 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. 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. 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.

#### F. Apprenticeship Path

1. To initiate the Apprenticeship Training Path the applicant and applicant's mentor must complete and submit an application to the Department. The application shall state the intent to participate in apprenticeship training and include the social security numbers, names, addresses, commercial fishing license numbers, and photocopies of the state issued photo identification of both the applicant and the applicant's mentor. Additionally, the mentor's valid commercial crab trap gear license number must be provided.

2. The applicant shall complete a minimum of 200 hours of apprenticeship training related to crab fishing under supervision of the applicant's designated mentor. Training hours shall be recorded daily on training log forms provided by the Department. Copies of the

training logs shall be submitted to the Department on a quarterly basis. A minimum of 100 hours of training shall be performed and logged on days when the applicant's mentor has harvested and reported trip ticket sales of crabs. Any previous work or training experience in the crab fishery conducted prior to the date the apprenticeship is initiated shall not count toward the applicant's total required hours.

3. Upon completion, the applicant and mentor must complete and submit a notarized affidavit signed by both the applicant and the mentor and include the original signed training log forms. The affidavit shall be provided by the Department and indicate the completion of the apprenticeship, affirm the accuracy of the associated log forms, and include the name, address, and commercial fishing license numbers of both the applicant and the mentor.

#### G. Sponsorship Path

1. To initiate the Sponsorship Training Path the applicant and applicant's sponsor must complete and submit an application to the Department. The application shall state the intent to participate in sponsorship training and include the social security numbers, names, addresses, commercial fishing license numbers, and photocopies of state issued photo identification of both the applicant and the applicant's sponsor. Additionally, the sponsor's valid commercial crab trap gear license number must be provided.

2. The Department shall issue a special crab trap permit allowing 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 fisherman's license number. This permit shall only be issued once and shall only be valid for the duration of the sponsorship. The applicant must complete a minimum of twenty (20) crab fishing trips evidenced by trip tickets.

Any trips or landings conducted prior to the date the sponsorship is initiated shall not count toward the applicant's total required crab fishing trips.

3. Upon completion, the applicant and sponsor must complete and submit a notarized affidavit signed by both the applicant and the sponsor and include copies of the trip tickets used to evidence the required crab fishing trips. The affidavit shall be provided by the Department and indicate the completion of the sponsorship, affirm the accuracy of the associated trip tickets, and include the name, address, and commercial fishing license numbers of both the applicant and the sponsor.

#### H. Optional Training

1. Applicants may substitute attendance at the following Department approved meetings or educational events for required apprenticeship hours and sponsorship trips: Louisiana Crab Task Force meetings, Crab Dock Days, and annual Louisiana Fisheries Summits. The Department may identify additional meetings and events eligible for substitution.

a. Each hour of meeting attendance shall substitute for one hour of the apprenticeship requirement. Every ten (10) hours of meeting attendance shall substitute for one fishing trip of the sponsorship requirement.

b. A maximum fifty (50) hours of meeting attendance may be substituted for the apprenticeship requirements, or a maximum five (5) fishing trips may be substituted for the sponsorship requirements.

2. Attendance at meetings or educational events shall be documented by a designated Department employee or agent. The applicant shall sign-in upon arrival, present valid photo identification and provide their commercial license number. Upon departure, the applicant shall sign-out.

a. Applicants who sign in prior to the start of an event and sign out after the conclusion of an event shall receive substitution credit hours equal only to the length of the event. Applicants shall not receive extra credit hours for arriving early or staying late at an event.

b. Applicants who fail to sign-in or sign-out shall not receive credit hours for attending an event.

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 56:305.6.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Wildlife and Fisheries Commission, LR .

Robert J. Barham

Secretary