REGULATIONS GOVERNING TAKE, SALE OR TRANSPORT OF CRAYFISH FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES  

GENERAL

All persons who take crayfish for commercial purposes from the wild must abide by laws passed by the Legislature, which are found in the Fish and Game Code, and by regulations adopted by the Fish and Game Commission, which are found in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR). Pertinent laws are described in this leaflet and pertinent regulations presented at the end of the leaflet.

REGULATIONS GOVERNING COMMERCIAL UTILIZATION OF CRAYFISH

The Fish and Game Commission has authority to regulate the take of crayfish for commercial purposes (Section 8491 of the Fish and Game Code). Traps used to take crayfish may not exceed 3 feet in greatest dimension, and any other species taken in the traps must be returned to the water immediately (Section 9024 of the Fish and Game Code). Almost all remaining pertinent regulations governing commercial crayfish fishing for bait, human consumption, and for scientific and educational purposes are found in Section 116 of Title 14, CCR.

Crayfish Permit

A crayfish permit and a commercial fishing license are required of all persons who for profit, take crayfish for bait, human consumption, or for scientific and educational purposes. If a boat is used during the fishing operation, a commercial fishing vessel registration is also required. Please call (916) 928-5822 for more information on the crayfish permit, commercial fishing license, and commercial vessel registration.

New or renewal applications, together with the license fees, should be mailed to the License and Revenue Branch, 1740 N. Market Street, Sacramento, California 95834. The applications will be forwarded to the appropriate region for approval. Please allow four to six weeks for processing. Crayfish permit and commercial fishing applications may be obtained from the offices listed on the following page or on the Internet at http://www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/.

1 Prepared by Fisheries Branch, November 1996; revision June 2008.
Crayfish for Bait

A Live Freshwater Bait License is required for all persons who, for profit, capture, possess, transport, or sell live freshwater fish, freshwater clams, or crayfish for bait. Laws and regulations pertaining to the capture, possession, and sale of live freshwater bait, are found in Inland Fisheries Informational Leaflet No. 7. This leaflet, together with an application for a Live Freshwater Bait Fish License, may be obtained at one of the office in the table above or on the Internet at [http://www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/).
Crayfish Commercial Fishing Areas

The following counties or portions of counties are the only areas were commercial fishing operations for crayfish are allowed:
1. Tehama, Glenn, Butte, Colusa, Sutter, Yuba, Yolo, Sacramento, Solano, Contra Costa, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Kings, Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, San Diego and Imperial counties.
3. Madera, Fresno, Tulare and Kern counties west of the westerly boundaries of the National Park or National Forest lands.

IMPORTATION AND TRANSPORTATION RESTRICTIONS

Importation of any live crayfish into California requires a permit issued by the Department. Live importation of exotic species of crayfish also requires authorization of the California Fish and Game Commission. More information about importation laws and regulations as well as applications for the required permit is found in Inland Fisheries Informational Leaflet No. 36.

This leaflet and all applications are available at any of the Fish and Game offices listed on page 2 or on the Internet at http://www.dfg.ca.gov/licensing/.

Section 671 of Title 14, CCR, prohibits the importation or release alive in California of any species of crayfish of the family Cambaridae, except Procambarus clarkii and Orconectes virilis. Crayfish can be agricultural pests because they burrow into banks and levees and eat young rice plants.

Procambarus and Orconectes prefer sloughs, canals, and ditches where the water is relatively warm and vegetation is plentiful. The highest concentrations of these two genera are found in the irrigation systems and rice fields of the Central Valley and in southern California. Each fall and winter most of these waterways are drained and huge quantities of crayfish are lost. The Department encourages the use of the crayfish resource, but warns that fishermen must have the landowner’s permission before trespassing on posted lands.

Virtually all of the crayfish entering the commercial crayfish fishery in the Delta and lower Sacramento River belong to the genus Pacifastacus. Only an occasional specimen of Procambarus has been found in the commercial catch. Unless notified otherwise by Department personnel, fishers in this area should assume their catch is made up of Pacifastacus only.

CARING FOR THE CATCH

The category "unacceptable crayfish" includes both undersized and dead crayfish. The percentage of short crayfish in your catch can be minimized by careful sorting, but the
percentage of dead crayfish in your catch is directly related to the treatment your crayfish receive after sorting. The key to keeping your catch alive until they are delivered to the processing plant is keeping them clean, cool, and moist.

Bait or mud, if allowed to remain on the crayfish, will decrease their survival; but the two biggest causes of crayfish mortality in the totes are heat and dryness. First, make sure your catch is not stacked any higher in the totes than 13 inches. Next, if the crayfish have not yet been rinsed off, throw several buckets of water over them, then place a wet burlap sack on top of them, cover your tote, and place it in the shade. If you have additional traps to pull, occasionally throw a bucket of water over the crayfish already in the totes. If the days are extremely hot, try to pull your traps early in the morning. It is best to get your catch to the processor as soon as possible. If you have to hold your crayfish overnight, they should be iced down with about 1 to 2 inches of ice.

**CRAYFISH IDENTIFICATION**

For commercial purposes, crayfish need only be identified to genus. Three genera are recognized in California: (1) *Pacifastacus*, (2) *Procambarus*, and (3) *Orconectes*. The distinguishing characteristics of these crayfish are illustrated in the following figures.

![Ventral view of generalized male and female crayfish.](image)
Figure 2. Dorsal view of carapace, male first abdominal appendage, and claw of
PLEASE READ THESE REGULATIONS CAREFULLY BEFORE YOU APPLY FOR A LICENSE AND A PERMIT.

FISH AND GAME CODE SECTIONS REGARDING COMMERCIAL FISHING AND COMMERCIAL CRAYFISH

7850. (a) Excepting persons expressly exempted under this code, no person shall use or operate, or assist in using or operating, any boat, aircraft, net, trap, line, or other appliance to take fish or amphibia for commercial purposes, and no person shall cause to be brought ashore, any fish or amphibia at any point in the state for the purpose of selling them in a fresh state or shall contribute materially to the activities on board the commercial fishing vessel, unless the person holds a commercial fishing license issued by the department.

(b) Any person not required under subdivision (a) to hold a commercial fishing license shall register his or her presence on board the commercial fishing vessel in a log maintained by the owner or operator of the vessel according to the requirements of the department.

(c) As used in this section, "person" does not include persons who are less than 16 years of age, a partnership, corporation, or association. Any person, partnership, corporation, limited liability company, or association may pay the fees for a license issued to any person.

(d) This article does not apply to the taking, transporting, or selling of live freshwater fish for bait by the holder of a live freshwater bait fish license issued pursuant to Section 8460.

7880. (a) Every person owning or operating any vessel used in connection with fishing operations for profit who has been issued a commercial boat registration pursuant to Section 7881 shall display, for the purpose of identification, a Department of Fish and Game registration number on the vessel in a manner designated by the department.

(b) The method of displaying the registration number on the vessel shall be determined by the department after consultation with the Department of Boating and Waterways, taking into consideration the responsibilities and duties of the Department of Boating and Waterways as prescribed in the Harbors and Navigation Code.

(c) The registration number is not transferable, and it is a permanent fixture upon the vessel for which it is originally issued.

7881. (a) Every person who owns or operates a vessel in public waters in connection with fishing operations for profit in this state, or who brings fish into this state, or who, for profit, permits persons to fish therefrom, shall submit an application for commercial boat registration on forms provided by the department and shall be issued a registration number.

(b) A commercial boat registration may be issued to any resident owner or operator of a vessel upon payment of a base fee of two hundred fifty dollars ($250). The commercial boat registration shall be carried aboard the vessel at all times, and shall be posted in a conspicuous place.

(c) A commercial boat registration may be issued to any nonresident owner or operator of a vessel upon payment of a base fee of seven hundred fifty dollars ($750). The commercial boat registration shall be carried aboard the vessel at all times and shall be posted in a conspicuous place.

(d) If a registered vessel is lost, destroyed, or sold, the owner of the vessel shall immediately report the loss, destruction, or sale to the department.

(e) This section does not apply to any person required to be licensed as a guide pursuant to Section 2536.

(f) The base fees specified in this section are applicable to the 2004 license year, and shall be adjusted annually thereafter pursuant to Section 713.

8030. Any person who engages in any business for profit involving fish shall be licensed pursuant to this article, except as follows:

(a) A commercial fisherman who sells fish only to persons licensed under this article to purchase or receive fish from commercial fishermen and who does not engage in any activity described in Section 8034, 8035, or 8036 unless licensed to engage in both activities.
(b) A person licensed pursuant to Section 8460 who only takes, transports, or sells live freshwater fish for bait.
(c) A person who sells fish or aquaculture products only at retail to the ultimate consumer if that person does not conduct any activities described in Section 8033, 8035, or 8036.
(d) Pursuant to Division 12 (commencing with Section 15000), a person who deals only in products of aquaculture.
(e) A person who deals only with nonnative live products that are not utilized for human consumption but that are utilized solely for pet industry or hobby purposes and who does not engage in the activities described in Section 8033.1.
(f) A person who is employed by the fish receiver to unload fish or fish products from a commercial fishing boat at a dock.
(g) A person who purchases, sells, takes, or receives live marine fish for use as live bait, that are not brought ashore, and who does not engage in any activity described in Section 8033, 8033.1, 8034, 8035, or 8036.
(h) A person who does not purchase or obtain fish, but who acts as an agent for others while negotiating purchases, or sales of fish in return for a fee, commission, or other compensation.

8490. No crayfish taken from Lake Tahoe or the Lake Tahoe Basin may be sold or purchased.

8491. The taking of crayfish shall be subject to such regulations as the commission may prescribe.

8492. The department shall take the steps it determines are necessary to prevent overfishing of crayfish in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. Those steps may include, but are not limited to, submitting to the Legislature proposed legislation to place limitations on the commercial crayfishing in that area.

8047. (a) (1) A person licensed under Article 7 (commencing with Section 8030) who takes his or her own fish shall make a legible record in the form of the landing receipt as required by Sections 8043 and 8043.1 at the time the fish are brought ashore. The original signed copy of the landing receipt shall be delivered by the licensee to the department on or before the 16th day or the last day of the month in which the fish were landed, whichever date occurs first after landing. A copy of the landing receipt shall be retained by the licensee for a period of four years and shall be available for inspection at any time within that period by the department. A copy of the landing receipt shall be delivered to an agent authorized in writing by the majority of the persons who participated in the taking of the fish, excluding the commercial fisherman receiving the original copy.

(b) Every commercial fisherman who sells fish taken from the waters of this state or brought into this state in fresh condition to persons not licensed to receive fish for commercial purposes pursuant to Article 7 (commencing with Section 8030) shall make a legible record in the form of the landing receipt required by Sections 8043 and 8043.2. Transportation receipts shall be completed at the time the fish are transferred from the fishing vessel.

(c) (1) Every commercial fisherman or his or her designee, who transports, causes to be transported, or delivers to another person for transportation, any fish, except herring, taken from the waters of this state or brought into this state in fresh condition, shall fill out a transportation receipt according to the instructions and on forms provided by the department at the time the fish are brought ashore.
(2) The original signed copy of the transportation receipt shall be delivered by the commercial fisherman to the department on or before the 16th day or the last day of the month in which the fish were landed, whichever date occurs first after landing. A copy of the transportation receipt shall be retained by the commercial fisherman who filled it out for a period of four years and shall be available for inspection at any time within that period by the department. A copy of the transportation receipt shall be given to and retained by the person transporting the fish until the fish are sold fresh, processed, or otherwise disposed of.

(3) The transportation receipt is required only for transit purposes.

(4) A person transporting fish from the point of first landing under a transportation receipt is not required to be licensed to conduct the activities of a fish receiver as described in Section 8033.

(5) The transportation book receipt shall be issued to an individual fisherman and is not transferable.

(d) The transportation receipt shall contain all of the following information:

1. The name of each species of fish, pursuant to Section 8045.
2. The date and time of the receipt.
3. The accurate weight of the species of fish being transported. Sablefish may be reported in dressed weight, and if so reported, shall have the round weights computed, for purposes of management quotas, by multiplying 1.6 times the reported dressed weight.
4. The name and identification number of the fisherman. The signature of the fisherman authorizing transportation.
5. The name of the person transporting the fish.
6. The name of the fish business, the fish business identification number, and the corresponding landing receipt number issued by the fish business to the commercial fisherman.
7. The department registration number of the vessel and the name of the vessel.
8. The department origin block number where the fish were caught.
9. The port of first landing.
10. Any other information the department may prescribe.

(e) The numbered transportation receipt forms in each individual transportation receipt book shall be completed sequentially. A voided fish transportation receipt shall have the word "VOID" plainly and noticeably written on the face of the receipt. A voided fish transportation receipt shall be submitted to the department in the same manner as a completed fish transportation receipt is submitted to the department. A commercial fisherman who is no longer conducting business as a licensed fisherman shall forward all unused transportation receipts and transportation receipt books to the department immediately upon terminating his or her business activity.

9004. Every trap shall be raised, cleaned, serviced, and emptied at intervals, not to exceed 96 hours, weather conditions at sea permitting, and no trap shall be abandoned in the waters of this state.

9005. Every trap or string of traps, shall be marked with a buoy.

9024. Crayfish traps. Crayfish traps may be used at anytime in any district to take crayfish only. Traps shall not exceed three feet in greatest dimension. Any other species taken with crayfish traps shall be returned to the water immediately. The Commission may prohibit the use of crayfish traps which will injure fish or which will entrap unnecessarily large numbers of fish other than crayfish.

TITLE 14 SECTIONS REGARDING COMMERCIAL CRAYFISH

116. Crayfish. Freshwater crayfish may not be taken for commercial purposes except in accordance with the following regulations:

(a) Licenses and Permits Required.

1. Crayfish may not be taken for commercial purposes except under a revocable, nontransferable, numbered permit issued by the department. See subsection 699(b) of these regulations for the fee for this permit. (NOTE: This fee shall be charged effective April 1, 1992.) Persons taking crayfish for a fee under the authority of a scientific collector's permit do not need to have this permit.

2. Except for those taking crayfish for a fee under the authority of a scientific collector's permit, every person who takes, assists in taking, possesses or transports crayfish while on any boat or vessel, or who uses or operates or assists in using or operating any boat, trap, or other appliance to take crayfish, must
have a valid crayfish permit issued to him and must be in possession of said permit while engaged in any of such activities.

(3) Crayfish may not be taken for commercial purposes for human consumption except under the authority of a commercial fishing license. Commercial fishermen taking crayfish shall also comply with requirements of the Fish and Game Code relating to commercial fishing vessel registration and other applicable commercial laws.

(4) Crayfish may not be taken as live bait for commercial purposes except under the authority of a live freshwater bait fish license.

(5) Crayfish permits shall contain all applicable regulations and shall be conditioned on compliance with such regulations and the applicable provisions of law.

(6) The application for such a permit shall contain the statement, signed by the applicant, that he has read, understands, and agrees to be bound by all the terms of the permit.

(7) Such permits shall be issued annually by the department for the period from April 1 to March 31 of the following year, or, if issued after the beginning of such term, for the remainder thereof. A crayfish permit may be revoked or suspended, for a period not to exceed one year, by the commission for violation of any of the terms of the permit or provisions of law relating to the taking of crayfish by the permittee or his agent, servant, employee, or person acting under his direction and control. However, any person who has had such a permit revoked may be required by the commission to appear before it and no new permit may be issued to such person unless the commission finds that such issuance will be in the best interests of the crayfish resource.

(8) The permit number of the person owning or in command of any boat used to take crayfish shall be visibly displayed on both sides of the boat in 10-inch black numbers, one-inch wide, on a white background.

(b) Records. The department may require persons taking crayfish for commercial purposes to keep an accurate, complete record of daily fishing operations on forms provided by the department. If so required, the original copy of the completed forms, recording one month's fishing activity, shall be mailed to the department by the fifth day of the following month.

(c) Fishing Area and Season.

(1) Area: Crayfish may be taken for commercial purposes only in the following counties or portions thereof except that no crayfish shall be taken in any lake or reservoir within the county:

(A) Tehama, Glenn, Butte, Colusa, Sutter, Yuba, Yolo, Sacramento, Solano, Contra Costa, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Kings, Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, San Diego and Imperial counties.

(B) Nevada, Placer, El Dorado, Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne and Mariposa counties west of Highway 49.

(C) Madera, Fresno, Tulare and Kern counties west of the westerly boundaries of the National Park or National Forest lands.

(2) Open Season: All year.

(d) Restricted Sale.

(1) Crayfish taken under the authority of a commercial license and a crayfish permit may be used only for human consumption and may not be sold, purchased or traded for any other use, except that they may be sold to a registered aquaculturist.

(2) Crayfish taken under the authority of a live bait fish license shall be used only for bait purposes and shall not be sold, purchased or used for any other purpose.

(e) Size Limit.

(1) No live crayfish of the genus Pacifastacus less than three and five-eights inches (92mm) in length from tip of nose (acumen) to tip of tail (telson), measured in a straight line ventral side up, may be taken commercially, except an allowable percentage of unacceptable (dead or undersized) Pacifastacus in any load or lot shall not be more than 10% by number.

(2) With the exception of the 10% allowable unacceptable crayfish, all other undersized Pacifastacus shall be returned unharmed to the waters from which taken. Such crayfish shall be sorted and returned immediately following processing of any trap or trap line before pulling additional traps or before returning to any dock or landing.

(3) The processing plants may not possess any cooked crayfish of the genus Pacifastacus which are less than three and one-half inches (89 mm) in length from the tip of nose (acumen) to tip of tail (telson), measured in a straight line ventral side up, except an allowable percentage of undersized Pacifastacus
shall not be more than 5% by number of the total crayfish received at the processing plant during the day or processing.

(4) Any undersized Pacifastacus taken to the processing plant shall be returned to the water from which they were taken within twenty-four hours from the time of arrival at the processing plant. Either the processor or a commercial fisherman shall return the crayfish. Such crayfish shall be maintained alive and in good condition until they are released.

(5) There is no minimum size limit on crayfish of the genus Procambarus or the genus Orconectes.

(6) To determine the percentage of unacceptable crayfish of the genus Pacifastacus which are either dead and/or less than the minimum size limit fixed by this section, samples shall be taken from various portions of the load or lot and shall be measured and counted. The mean of the combined counts of all samples taken shall be used to determine the percentage of unacceptable Pacifastacus in the load or lot. Samples shall be taken in containers of not less than one gallon size approximately full of Pacifastacus. At least three such samples shall be taken from any load or lot.

(f) Female Crayfish. Any female crayfish carrying eggs (berried crayfish) or young shall be returned unharmed to the water at the time the crayfish are sorted.

(g) Methods of Take. Crayfish may be taken only by hand, hook and line, dip net not over six feet in greatest diameter or with a trap not over three feet in greatest dimension.

(h) Trap Identification. All crayfish traps shall be permanently tagged with a visible, metal tag bearing the crayfish permit number of the fisherman. Any person pulling or raising crayfish traps bearing a permit number other than his own must have in his possession written permission to pull the traps from the person who holds the crayfish permit number identifying such traps.

(i) Buoys. Each person taking crayfish for commercial purposes shall designate a trapping area with at least two buoys, one at either end of a trap line; however, the buoys do not have to be attached to the trap line. Such buoys shall be spaced not less than 200 feet, nor more than 1,200 feet apart. The upstream buoy shall be painted red and the downstream buoy white. When single traps are employed such traps shall be individually buoyed with a minimum spacing of 200 feet between traps. Buoys for single traps shall be painted yellow. Each buoy shall bear the permit number of the fisherman in a color that contrasts with that of the buoy. The permit number on the buoy shall be at least 1 1/2 inches in height and all markings shall be at least one-quarter inch in width.

(j) Containers. Any container used to hold or transport live crayfish shall be vented at the bottom. The depth of crayfish in such container shall not exceed 13 inches.

(k) All crayfish traps must be raised and processed at least once every 72 hours. Traps not processed within this time limit shall be considered abandoned and shall be subject to seizure by department personnel.

(l) Scientific and Educational Use.

(1) Each person who collects crayfish for a fee for scientific and educational purposes shall have a commercial fishing license, and each boat used for this purpose shall be registered as a commercial fishing vessel. However, if a fisherman is collecting crayfish of the genus Pacifastacus he must also have a scientific collecting permit (see section 650, title 14, CAC, for the requirements).

(2) A qualified scientific supply house shall issue a market order to each fisherman before the fisherman collects crayfish. Each market order shall specify the collecting locality, and the duration of that market order. Each fisherman shall have a market order in his possession when collecting crayfish.

(3) The fishing area and season fixed in subsection (c) and the minimum size limit fixed in subsection (e) of this section shall also apply to the fishermen collecting crayfish for a fee for scientific and educational purposes.

671. Importation, Transportation and Possession of Live Restricted Animals.

(a) It shall be unlawful to import, transport, or possess alive animals restricted in subsection (c) below except under permit issued by the Department of Fish and Game. Permits may be issued by the department as specified herein and for purposes designated in Section 671.1 subject to the conditions and restrictions designated by the department. Except for mammals listed in Fish and Game Code Section 3950 or live aquatic animals requiring a permit pursuant to Fish and Game Code Section 2271, no permit is required by this section for any animal being imported, transported, or possessed pursuant to any other permit issued by the department. Cities and counties may also prohibit possession or require a permit for these and other species not requiring a state permit.
(b) The commission has determined the below listed animals are not normally domesticated in this state. Mammals listed to prevent the depletion of wild populations and to provide for animal welfare are termed "welfare animals", and are designated by the letter "W". Those species listed because they pose a threat to native wildlife, the agriculture interests of the state or to public health or safety are termed "detrimental animals" and are designated by the letter "D". The department shall include the list of welfare and detrimental wild animals as part of DFG MANUAL NO. 671 (2/25/92) IMPORTATION, TRANSPORTATION AND POSSESSION OF RESTRICTED SPECIES, to be made available to all permittees and other interested individuals.

(c) Restricted species include:

.....subsections 671(c)(1) through (671(c)(7) omitted

(8) Class Crustacea -Crustaceans

(A) All species of Family Cambaridae -Crayfish, etc. (D), except Procamburus clarkii and Orconectes virilis not restricted.

(B) All species of genus Eriocheir (D).

.....subsections 671(c)(9) through (671(c)(11) omitted