

By: Representative Ellington

To: Conservation and  
Water Resources

## HOUSE BILL NO. 1209

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 49-15-84, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,  
2 TO AUTHORIZE THE IMPORTATION OF FEMALE SPONGE CRABS UNDER CERTAIN  
3 CIRCUMSTANCES; TO REPEAL SECTION 49-15-85, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF  
4 1972, WHICH PROHIBITS THE TAKING OF FEMALE CRABS BEARING EGGS; AND  
5 FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

7 SECTION 1. Section 49-15-84, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
8 amended as follows:

9 49-15-84. (1) The commission shall coordinate with the Gulf  
10 Coast Research Laboratory in the development of an ordinance for  
11 the purpose of taking *Callinectes sapidus* (blue crab) or allied  
12 species. The ordinance shall include provisions for the  
13 establishment of size limits for individual or market use as well  
14 as establishing legal harvest size for the cultivating of peeler  
15 crabs and soft-shell crabs.

16 (2) The commission shall establish minimum specifications  
17 for crab traps and shall require buoys of adequate size which are  
18 identified as to the owner of the buoys and traps. Within the  
19 bays and bayous recreational crabbers may use no more than six (6)  
20 crab traps per household. The taking of crabs with drop nets is  
21 permitted without a license.

22 (3) It is unlawful to catch, hold or have in possession any  
23 female sponge crab or any female crab bearing visible eggs at any  
24 time within marine waters. It is not unlawful to catch those  
25 crabs unintentionally, if the crabs are immediately returned to  
26 the water. The provisions of this section shall not apply to the  
27 importation of female crabs during closed season from other

28 coastal states where the taking and possession of such crabs is  
29 lawful, provided that each shipment or load of such imported  
30 female sponge crabs shall have with it either an invoice from a  
31 licensed harvester in a state which legally allows their taking,  
32 or a certificate from that state's appropriate agency verifying  
33 that the crabs were taking legally.

34 (4) During open seasons and in open areas, crabs may be  
35 taken with any legal crab traps (pots), drop nets, dip nets,  
36 trawls, butterfly net, skimmer net or cast nets.

37 SECTION 2. Section 49-15-85, Mississippi Code of 1972, which  
38 prohibits the taking of female crabs bearing eggs, is repealed.

39 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect and be in force from  
40 and after its passage.