AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 49-15-84, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO PROHIBIT THE POSSESSION OF EGG-BEARING FEMALE CRABS EXCEPT FOR THE IMPORTATION OF FEMALE CRABS FROM OTHER STATES WHERE THE TAKING AND POSSESSION OF SUCH CRABS IS LAWFUL; TO REPEAL SECTION 49-15-85, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, WHICH ALLOWS THE HARVEST OF EGG-BEARING CRABS AT CERTAIN TIMES OF THE YEAR; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

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

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

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

(3) It is unlawful to catch, hold or have in possession any female sponge crab or any female crab bearing visible eggs at any time ***. It is not unlawful to catch those crabs unintentionally, if the crabs are immediately returned to the water. The provisions of this subsection (3) shall not apply to the importation of female crabs from other states where the taking
and possession of such crabs is lawful if each shipment or load of such imported female crabs shall have with it either an invoice from a licensed harvester in a state which legally allows their taking or a certificate from that state's appropriate agency verifying that the crabs were taken legally.

SECTION 2. Section 49-15-85, Mississippi Code of 1972, which allows the harvest of egg-bearing crabs at certain times of the year, is repealed.

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after July 1, 2001.