

**Mississippi Crab Fishery Report - MDMR
 GSMFC Crab Subcommittee Meeting – March 2022
 Reporting Period – January – December 2021**

Regulations

No regulatory changes

Licenses

Through December 31, 2021, 171 resident commercial crab trap licenses, 35 non-resident commercial crab trap licenses, 106 resident commercial crab trawl licenses, and 2 non-resident commercial crab trawl licenses were sold for the 2021-2022 license year (Figure 1). A total of 465 resident recreational crab trap licenses and 77 non-resident recreational crab trap licenses were sold between January 1 and December 31, 2021.

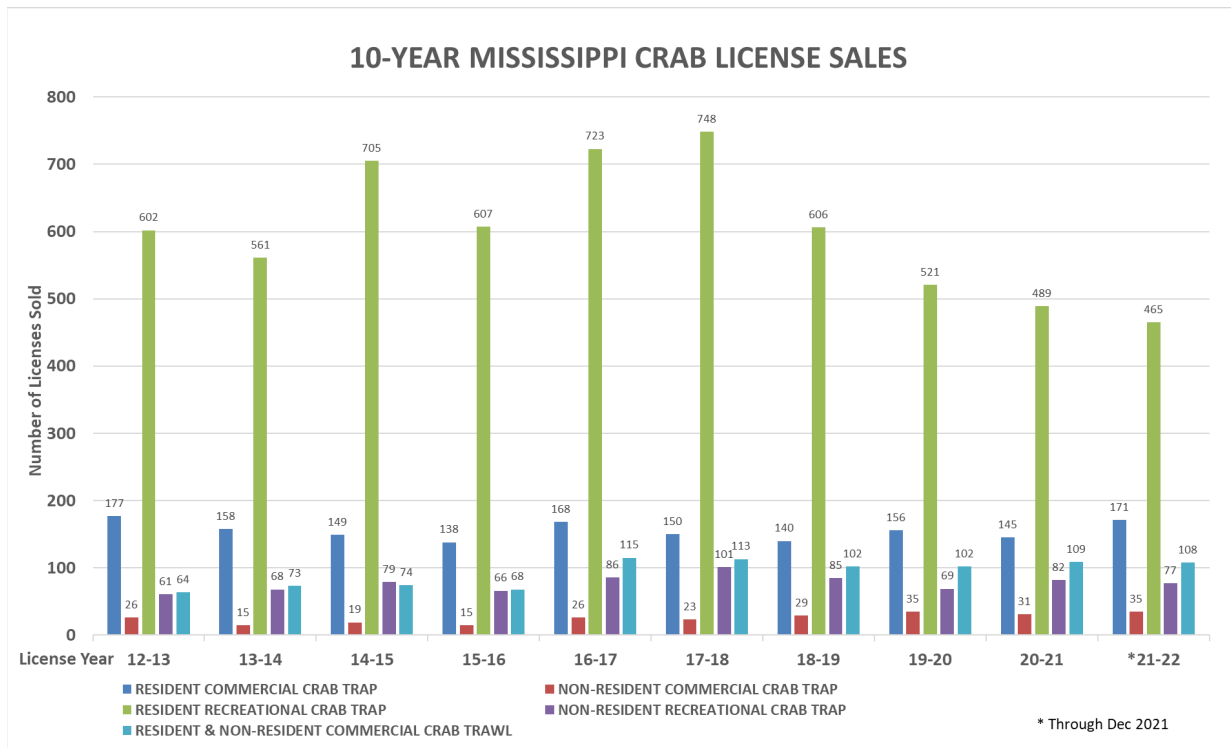


Figure 1. Mississippi Crab Licenses Sold – 2012-2021.

Landings

A total of 858,854 pounds of crabs were landed in Mississippi from January 1 to December 31, 2021 with a dockside value of approximately \$1,632,606 (Figure 2).

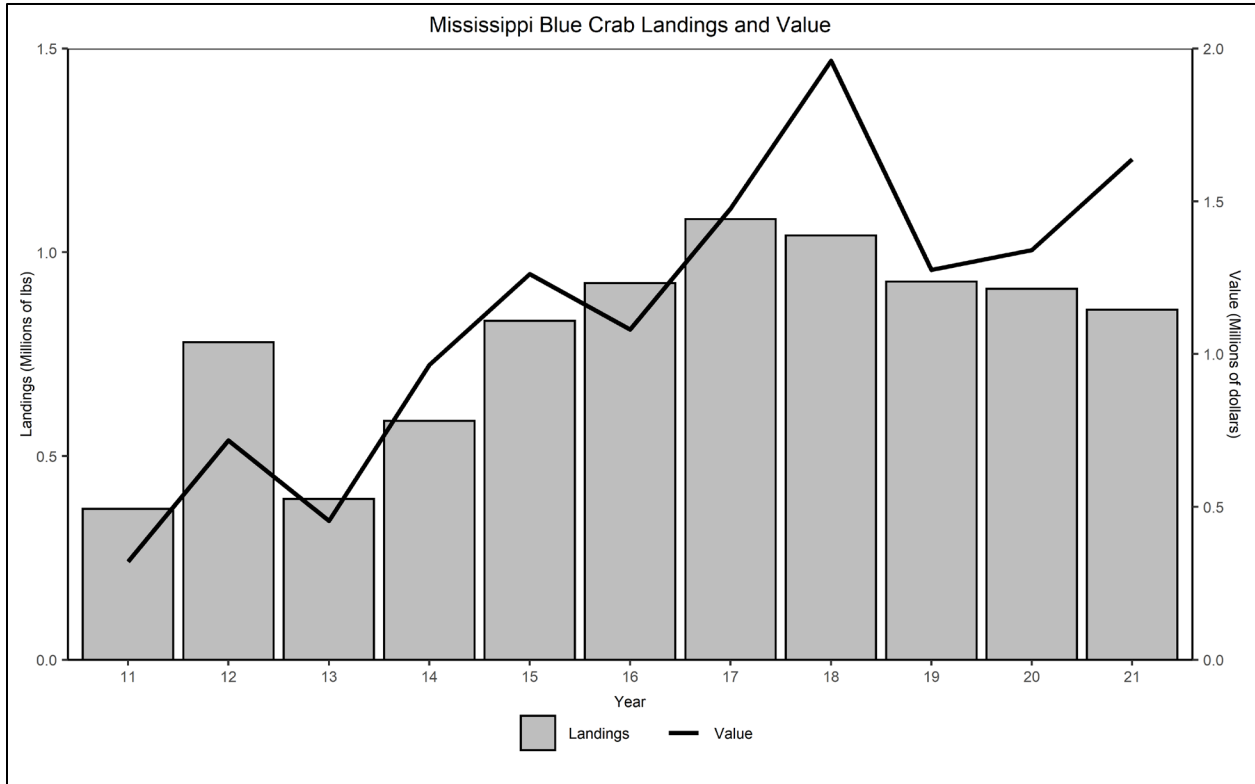


Figure 2. Annual Blue Crab Landings and Value – 2011-2021.

The previous 5-year January – December average Blue Crab landings was 957,255 pounds with a value of approximately \$1,426,458. Monthly landings versus the 5-year average are shown in Figure 3.

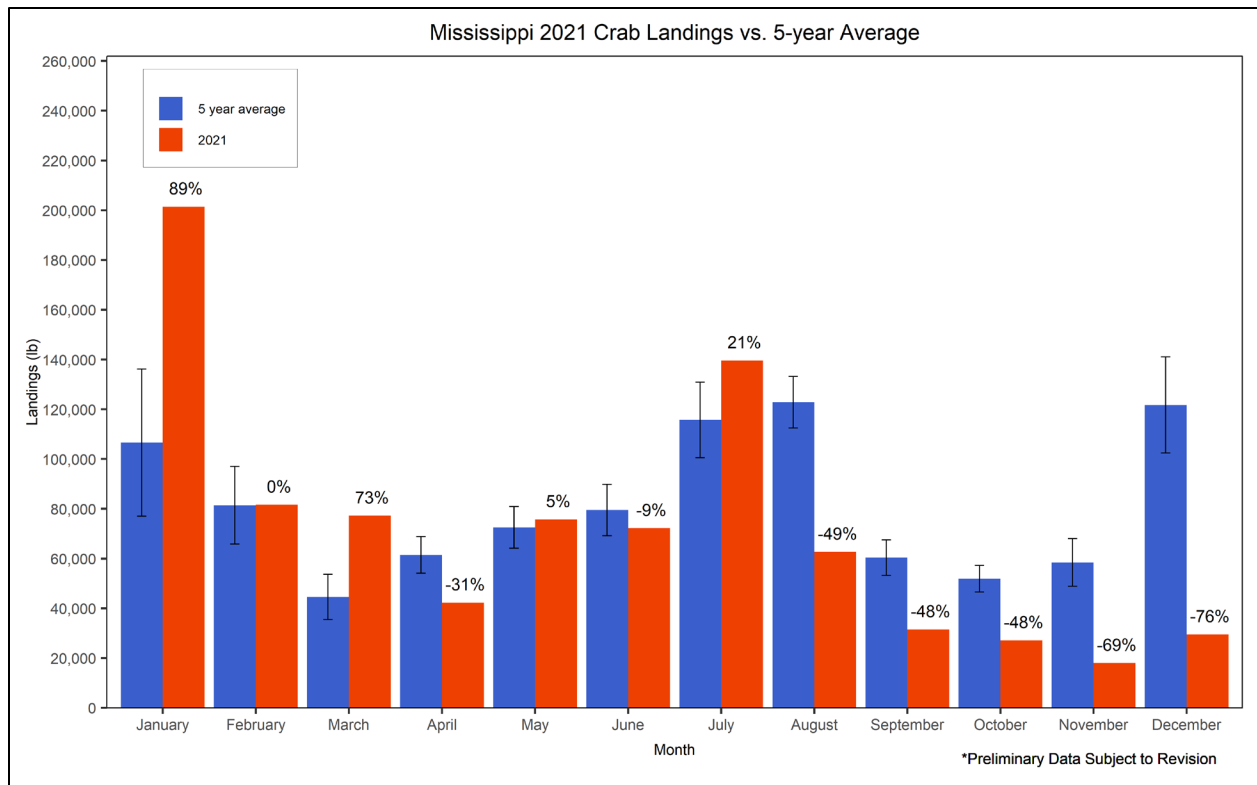


Figure 3. 2021 Monthly Crab Landings vs. 5-year Monthly Averages.

Derelict Crab Traps

A public cleanup was conducted from January 28-30, 2021. All commercial and recreational harvest areas inshore of ½ mile of the mainland shoreline were closed during the cleanup and drop-off locations were established in each of the three coastal counties. With the help of volunteers and fishermen 310 traps were recovered and all traps were recycled at a local scrap metal recycler.

The Mississippi Derelict Crab Trap Removal program has removed and recycled over 22,604 derelict crab traps from Mississippi waters since its inception in 1999.

TED's and Escape Rings

Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) has utilized 2011 fisheries disaster funding to distribute TEDs at no cost to Mississippi crab fishermen since October 2015. Through December 31, 2021, 7,396 TEDs have been distributed to both commercial and recreational crab fishermen with this funding and the program will continue while current supplies last.

Since 2008 MDMR has provided a total of 21,059 TEDs at no cost to crab fishermen through various programs.

Also funded through the 2011 disaster grant, and in response to a 2017 regulation change, MDMR has distributed 76,730 escape rings (2 3/8") through December 31, 2021. The escape rings are provided at no cost to licensed resident crab fishermen while current supplies last.

FID Sampling Programs

MDMR, Office of Marine Fisheries, Shrimp and Crab Bureau (SCB) staff continued fishery independent trap surveys for blue crabs within three major estuaries – St. Louis Bay, Back Bay of Biloxi, and the lower Pascagoula River. Each estuary was sampled monthly from January to December 2021 for a total of 36 sample sets. This program, which began in September 2014, provides data on CPUE, size and sex composition, blue crab abundance, and bycatch composition and 273 sample sets have been completed since the beginning of the project.

SCB staff implemented a new fishery independent study using experimental gear types in Mississippi coastal waterways. The program was funded through the GSMFC IJ State Research Funding (SuRF) Program. Two experimental trawls – 6' and 12' otter trawls – were tested for collection of juvenile finfish, penaeid shrimp and blue crabs. Two samples were collected with each trawl size in each of the three coastal counties at randomly selected sites each month. A total of 108 small trawls were completed from January to December 2021.

SCB staff also began a fishery independent crab trap survey in Mississippi commercial blue crab harvest waters using SuRF Program funding. Six crab traps were placed at a randomly selected site in each of the three coastal counties every month to provide data on CPUE, size and sex composition, blue crab abundance, and bycatch composition. A total of 216 traps were set and pulled from January to December 2021.

MDMR, Office of Marine Fisheries, Finfish Bureau (FB) staff also implemented an experimental fishery independent study using seines using SuRF Program funding. A 50' bag seine was tested for collection of YOY and juvenile finfish, penaeid shrimp and blue crabs. Monthly samples were collected at six fixed sites located in the three coastal counties. A total of 72 seine pulls were completed from January to December 2021.