

**NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION[571]**

**Adopted and Filed**

**Rulemaking related to turtles**

The Natural Resource Commission (Commission) hereby rescinds Chapter 86, “Turtles,” Iowa Administrative Code, and adopts a new Chapter 86 with the same title.

*Legal Authority for Rulemaking*

This rulemaking is adopted under the authority provided in Iowa Code sections 481A.38, 481A.39, 481A.67, 482.1, 482.5 and 482.11.

*State or Federal Law Implemented*

This rulemaking implements, in whole or in part, Iowa Code sections 481A.38, 481A.39, 481A.67, 482.1, 482.4, 482.5 and 482.11.

*Purpose and Summary*

Chapter 86 regulates the taking and possession of turtles from the waters of the State. These regulations ensure a sustainable harvest, which protects turtle populations from overharvest. This is accomplished by providing daily catch and possession limits, providing gear and method of take provisions, and designating open season dates. This chapter has been reviewed and edited consistent with Executive Order 10.

*Public Comment and Changes to Rulemaking*

Notice of Intended Action for this rulemaking was published in the Iowa Administrative Bulletin on January 7, 2026, as **ARC 9905C**. A public hearing was held on the following date(s):

- January 28, 2026
- February 4, 2026

No one attended the public hearings. No public comments were received. No changes from the Notice have been made.

*Adoption of Rulemaking*

This rulemaking was adopted by the Commission on April 9, 2026.

*Fiscal Impact*

This rulemaking has no fiscal impact to the State of Iowa.

*Jobs Impact*

After analysis and review of this rulemaking, no impact on jobs has been found.

*Waivers*

This rulemaking is subject to the waiver provisions of 571—Chapter 11. Any person who believes that the application of the discretionary provisions of this rulemaking would result in hardship or injustice to that person may petition the Commission for a waiver of the discretionary provisions, if any.

*Review by Administrative Rules Review Committee*

The Administrative Rules Review Committee, a bipartisan legislative committee which oversees rulemaking by executive branch agencies, may, on its own motion or on written request by any individual or group, review this rulemaking at its [regular monthly meeting](#) or at a special meeting.

The Committee’s meetings are open to the public, and interested persons may be heard as provided in Iowa Code section 17A.8(6).

*Effective Date*

This rulemaking will become effective on June 17, 2026.

The following rulemaking action is adopted:

ITEM 1. Rescind 571—Chapter 86 and adopt the following **new** chapter in lieu thereof:

CHAPTER 86  
TURTLES

**571—86.1(481A,482) Harvesting.** Turtles may be harvested from waters of the state subject to the following regulations.

**86.1(1) Species and season.** It shall be lawful to commercially and noncommercially (recreationally) harvest spiny softshell *Apalone spinifera*, smooth softshell *Apalone mutica*, and painted *Chrysemys picta* turtles from July 16 through May 14. Common snapping turtles *Chelydra serpentina* may be harvested commercially from July 16 through May 14 and recreationally year-round. Harvesting turtle eggs from wild nests is prohibited. Turtles shall not be harvested from gear set prior to midnight on July 15.

**86.1(2) Methods.** Harvest of turtles shall only be by hand, turtle hook, turtle trap, licensed commercial fishing gear in the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers only, and hook-and-line. Turtle traps shall be constructed with no more than one throat or funneling device. The last hoop to the tail-line of turtle traps shall have an unobstructed, functional escape hole with a minimum diameter in all directions of 7½ inches to allow passage of fish and small turtles. Barrel- and floating-type turtle traps must also meet the unobstructed, functional escape hole criterion.

**86.1(3) Daily catch and possession limits.**

a. The following daily catch limits apply to commercial and recreational harvesters, while the possession limits apply only to commercial harvesters:

Turtle Species	Daily Catch Limit (commercial and recreational)	Possession Limit (commercial only)
Common snapping turtle	4	20
Spiny softshell and smooth softshell turtle, in aggregate	1	5
Painted turtle	1	5

b. The possession limit for recreational harvesters is a maximum of 100 pounds of live turtles or 50 pounds of dressed turtles pursuant to Iowa Code section 483A.28. A recreational harvester’s daily catch limit shall not exceed this possession limit.

**86.1(4) Culling.** It is unlawful to sort, cull, high-grade, or otherwise replace any turtle in possession.

**86.1(5) Tags.** All harvesters shall affix a weather-resistant gear tag above the waterline to each piece of gear. The gear tag must plainly show the name, address, and license number of the licensee.

**86.1(6) Gear attendance.** All turtle traps shall be set with the top of the trap visible above the waterline at all times and shall be checked and completely emptied of catch at least once every 72 hours. When a trap is checked, turtles shall either be taken into possession up to the daily catch limit or immediately released.

**86.1(7) Exclusions.** Iowa Code chapter 482 does not apply to turtles taken and imported from outside the state. The boundary waters are considered to be within the state.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code sections 481A.38, 481A.39, 481A.67, 482.1, 482.4, 482.5, and 482.11.

[Filed 4/17/26, effective 6/17/26]

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