

CHAPTER 86  
TURTLES

[Prior to 12/31/86, Conservation Commission[290] Ch 115]

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

**86.1(1) *Species and season.*** It shall be lawful to commercially and noncommercially (recreationally) take spiny softshell (*Apalone spinifera*), smooth softshell (*Apalone mutica*), and painted (*Chrysemys picta*) turtles from July 16 to May 14. Common snapping turtles (*Chelydra serpentina*) may be taken commercially from July 16 to May 14, but may be taken recreationally year-round. The taking of 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.*** The method of taking 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 a functional escape hole provided 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 have a functional escape hole below the water surface with a minimum diameter in all directions of 7½ inches.

**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 turtle trap is checked, turtles shall either be taken into possession, up to the daily catch limit, or immediately released.

**86.1(7) *Exclusions.*** Chapter 482 does not apply to turtles taken and imported from outside the state. For purposes of this rule "state" does not include the boundary waters.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code sections 481A.38, 481A.39, 481A.67 as amended by 2016 Iowa Acts, House File 2357, 482.1, 482.4, and 482.11.

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