



FISHERMEN'S GEAR COMPENSATION AND UNDERWATER OBSTRUCTION REMOVAL FUND

The Fishermen's Gear Compensation and Underwater Obstruction Removal Fund is a statutorily dedicated fund administered by the Louisiana Department of Conservation and Energy (C&E). The fund supports the Fishermen's Gear Compensation and Underwater Obstruction Removal program, which was created by the Louisiana Legislature in 1979 to address conflicts between commercial fishing operations and underwater obstructions located in Louisiana's coastal waters.

The program provides financial compensation to Louisiana commercial fishermen whose fishing gear, equipment, or vessels are damaged after striking or becoming entangled with underwater obstructions located on state water bottoms within the Louisiana Coastal Zone. These obstructions may result from natural conditions, oil and gas infrastructure, pipelines, or other unknown hazards.

In addition to compensating fishermen, the program supports the identification and removal of underwater obstructions that create hazards to navigation and commercial fishing operations. Up to \$250,000 annually from the fund may be transferred to the Underwater Obstruction Removal Program to support survey and removal projects.

Statutory Authority

The program is authorized under Louisiana Revised Statutes R.S. 30:101.1 – 30:101.15, which established the Fishermen's Gear Compensation and Underwater Obstruction Removal Program and Dedicated Fund Account within the state treasury.

Funds deposited into the account are statutorily dedicated and may only be used for program purposes, including compensation payments and underwater obstruction removal activities.

Claim Eligibility and Payment Limits

Eligible claimants must be Louisiana resident commercial fishermen whose primary source of income is derived from commercial fishing activities and the incident must occur within the Louisiana Coastal Zone.

Claims must be submitted within 90 days of the date of the incident. To request a claim packet, contact the Department of Conservation and Energy, Office of Permitting and Compliance at (225) 342-7268.

Claim Limits

- Maximum payment per claim: \$5,000
- Maximum number of claims: Two claims per claimant per fiscal year
- Payment limitation: Compensation cannot exceed the claimant's fishing income from the prior year.
- Claims are limited to actual equipment or vessel damage and do not include lost profits or business interruption.

Funding Source

The program is funded through annual assessments on certain mineral leaseholders and pipeline right-of-way holders operating within the Louisiana Coastal Zone.

Under state law, the department may levy an annual fee of \$400 per qualifying mineral lease or pipeline right-of-way to maintain an adequate balance in the fund to pay valid claims.

Program Activity

The Fishermen's Gear Compensation Program processes approximately 50-70 claims annually from Louisiana commercial fishermen who experience equipment damage due to underwater obstructions.