Shrimpers in Terrebonne, Lafourche and Jefferson parishes will be allowed to pull pairs of 25-foot, double-rigged trawling nets beginning Monday, a privilege other coastal parishes have had for some time.

The fall shrimp season opens at 6 a.m.

The law prohibiting the use of double rig nets in the three parishes was struck down as unconstitutional last week by 19th District Judge Doug Moreau in Baton Rouge.

The lawsuit was filed by the Organization of Louisiana Fishermen, said Michael Osborne, a New Orleans attorney.

"It was a be-fair-to-fishermen's equality sort of lawsuit," Osborne said. "The ruling, in effect, says that the state constitution prohibits local laws that don't have a biological or fisheries basis.

"The constitution says you can have a state law, but it has to apply to everyone equally," Osborne said. "Look at the line between Jefferson and Plaquemines parishes. How can you say you can use a double trawl on one side and not the other side?"

Testimony presented to the court included a statement from Calvin Cheramie of Galliano, an OLF board member.

"Double rig shrimping is more efficient and is easier than single rig shrimping," Cheramie said. "I catch more shrimp when my boat is double rigged than when it is single rigged. With the double rig, I can trawl in a straight line without propwash entering my net.

"If I convert to a single trawl rig, then I will be handicapped in competing with two-rig boats when fishing in parishes where two rigs are allowed. I know from my many years of fishing that shrimp do not know where the parish boundaries are and that parish boundaries do not define or distinguish shrimping areas," Cheramie said.

"Parish boundaries are arbitrary distinctions insofar as shrimping areas or shrimp production are concerned. The boundaries of Jefferson Parish, for instance, go through many waterways and are unrelated to geographic, hydrologic or fishing characteristics.

"The special local law allowing two trawls in my neighboring parish, but only one trawl in the areas closest to my home port, is unfair and discriminatory," Cheramie said.

The Legislature passed the law banning double-rigging in the three parishes in 1986, but then suspended it by a resolution last year. The Legislature failed during its 1988 session to re-suspend the law, in effect making it valid once more.