

## **DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY**

### **Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Wildlife and Fisheries Commission**

#### 2023 Recreational Gag Grouper Season Modification

Louisiana's recreational gag grouper season was previously modified to open on September 1, 2023 and close on November 9, 2023. The regional administrator of NOAA Fisheries has informed the secretary that the 2023 recreational season for the harvest of gag grouper in the federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico will close on October 19, 2023 and will remain closed until the gag grouper recreational season opens in 2024. Action by the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council requested these emergency measures in order to prevent overfishing of gag grouper while a rebuilding plan for the stock is established. Compatible season regulations in state waters are preferable to provide effective rules and efficient enforcement for the fishery, and to prevent overfishing of the species in the long term.

In accordance with the emergency provisions of R.S. 49:962, which allows the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission to use emergency rules to set finfish seasons, R.S. 56:326.3 which provides that the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission may set seasons for saltwater finfish, and the authority given to the secretary by the commission in LAC 76:VII.335.G.5 to modify opening and closing dates of any commercial or recreational reef fish seasons in Louisiana state waters when he is informed by the regional administrator of NOAA Fisheries that the seasons have been modified in adjacent federal waters, the secretary hereby declares:

The season for the recreational harvest of gag grouper in Louisiana state waters shall close at 12:01 a.m. on October 19, 2023 and remain closed until the start of the 2024 recreational season. Effective with this closure, no person shall recreationally harvest or possess gag grouper whether within or without Louisiana waters.

Robert E. Shadoin  
Secretary