

DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY

Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Wildlife and Fisheries Commission

2021 Commercial Large Coastal Shark Season Adjustment

Louisiana's commercial fishery for large coastal sharks (great hammerhead, scalloped hammerhead, smooth hammerhead, nurse shark, blacktip shark, bull shark, lemon shark, sandbar shark, silky shark, spinner shark, and tiger shark) opened on January 1, 2021. NOAA Fisheries has informed the secretary that the aggregated large coastal (nurse shark, bull shark, lemon shark, sandbar shark, silky shark, spinner shark, and tiger shark) quota and the hammerhead (great hammerhead, scalloped hammerhead, and smooth hammerhead) quotas are being projected to exceed 80 percent which is the trigger for a closure. The blacktip shark quota remains under 80 percent and the commercial fishery for blacktip sharks will be the only species in the large coastal sharks group that remains open to commercial harvest.

In accordance with the emergency provisions of R.S. 49:953, 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.357.M.2 to modify large coastal shark seasons if notified by NOAA Fisheries of such an adjustment, the secretary hereby declares:

Effective 11:30 p.m., March 10, 2021, the commercial season for the harvest of species in the aggregated large coastal sharks group (nurse shark, bull shark, lemon shark, sandbar shark, silky shark, spinner shark, and tiger shark) and the hammerhead group (smooth hammerhead, scalloped hammerhead, and great hammerhead) shall close and will remain closed until January 1, 2022, at which time the season is scheduled to reopen. This closure will not pertain to persons holding a Federal Shark Research Permit issued by NOAA Fisheries Service, when those persons are legally fishing under the regulations promulgated for that permit including that a NMFS-approved observer is aboard the vessel. Nothing herein shall preclude the legal harvest of any Large Coastal Sharks by legally licensed recreational fishermen during the open season for recreational harvest. Effective with this closure, no person shall commercially harvest, possess, purchase, exchange, barter, trade, sell or attempt to purchase, exchange, barter, trade or sell large coastal sharks within the aggregated large coastal or hammerhead groups (nurse shark, bull shark, lemon shark, sandbar shark, silky shark, spinner shark, and tiger shark, smooth hammerhead, scalloped hammerhead, and great hammerhead) whether taken from within or without Louisiana waters, except for a Federal Shark Research Permit holder, when legally operating under that Permit. Also effective with the closure, no person shall possess sharks from the aggregated large coastal and hammerhead groups in excess of a daily bag limit whether taken from within or without Louisiana waters, which may only be in possession during the open recreational season. Nothing shall prohibit the possession or sale of fish legally taken prior to the closure, or from Federal Shark Research Permit

holders, provided that all commercial dealers possessing the aggregated large coastal and hammerhead groups taken legally prior to the closure shall maintain appropriate records in accordance with R.S. 56:306.5 and R.S. 56:306.6. Nothing shall prohibit the commercial harvest of blacktip sharks during this closure, the commercial season for which remains open until further notice.

Jack Montoucet
Secretary

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