

DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY

Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Wildlife and Fisheries Commission

2005#024

William Hogan
Chairman

2020 Private Recreational Red Snapper Season

In February 2020, NOAA Fisheries announced the implementation of a program and rules allowing the individual Gulf States, including Louisiana, to have management authority over fishing of red snapper by private recreational anglers in the federal waters of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) during state seasons set by the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission. Given this authority to establish management measures applicable to private anglers in Gulf Federal waters who are landing red snapper in Louisiana, private recreational fishing for red snapper in the EEZ will open concurrent with state seasons. State-permitted charter guides are only allowed to fish for red snapper within state waters (less than 9 nautical miles from the Louisiana coast). Federally-permitted charter vessels are not part of this authority and can only harvest red snapper during seasons determined by NOAA Fisheries whether inside or outside state waters and regardless of established seasons in state waters.

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 and R.S. 56:326.3, which provides that the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission may set seasons for saltwater finfish, the Commission hereby declares:

The 2020 recreational red snapper season, previously scheduled to open on April 4, 2020 in LAC 76:VII.335, shall be open on weekends only (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, including the Monday of Memorial Day and the Monday of Labor Day), beginning at 12:01 a.m. on Friday, May 22, 2020, until further notice. Size and bag limits shall remain at the currently established limits in LAC 76:VII.335 of 16 inches total length and 2 fish per person per day. This season will be in accordance with the provisions of the authority granted to Louisiana by NOAA Fisheries that allows for take within Federal waters out to 200 nautical miles during state seasons set by the Commission.

The Commission further authorizes the secretary of the department, upon notification of the Chairman of the Commission, to modify the recreational season for the harvest of red snapper when LA Creel data indicate the allotted quota is reached or projected to be reached or as he deems appropriate.

The Commission encourages recreational and charter anglers to help reduce the effects of barotrauma on released red snapper, and all reef fish, by using methods and devices that descend red snapper and reef fish back to a more survivable depth after being caught and prior to release.

Any closure shall prohibit the possession and/or landing of red snapper in state waters, except for federally permitted charter vessels or commercial Individual Fishing Quota holders operating under federal law during federally established seasons.

The Secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is authorized to take any necessary steps on behalf of the Commission to effectuate this Emergency Rule.