

DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY

**Reef Fish Harvest Regulations
2016 Recreational Gag Season
Gag and Black Grouper Size Limits**

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

The reef fish fishery in the Gulf of Mexico is cooperatively managed by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission (LWFC) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) with advice from the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council). Regulations promulgated by NOAA Fisheries are applicable in waters of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the United States. NOAA Fisheries, through the Gulf Council, has promulgated regulations adjusting the season for the recreational harvest of gag grouper to be open from June 1 through December 31, previously July 1 through December 2, each year. NOAA Fisheries has further promulgated regulations adjusting the minimum size limit of gag and black grouper from 22 inches total length to 24 inches total length based upon an analysis of size at maturity.

In order to enact regulations in a timely manner so as to have compatible regulations in place in Louisiana waters to coincide with these size and season modifications set forth by NOAA Fisheries, it is necessary that emergency rules be enacted.

In accordance with the emergency provisions of R.S. 49:953, the Administrative Procedures Act, which allows the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission to use emergency procedures to set finfish seasons, R.S. 56:6 (25) (a) and R.S. 56:326.3 which provides that the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission may set seasons and

limits for saltwater finfish, the Commission hereby declares:

The recreational season for gag grouper in Louisiana waters shall open on June 1, 2016 and remain open through December 31, 2016. The Commission further declares that the size limit for recreationally harvested gag and black grouper shall be 24 inches total length until further notice.

Bart Yakupzack, Chairman
Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission