

LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

June 26, 2018



**Robert J. Samanie, III
Chairman**

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

**The following constitute minutes of the Commission Meeting
and are not verbatim transcripts of the proceedings.**

**Audio files of the meetings are kept at the
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
2000 Quail Drive
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70808**

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AGENDA
Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

June 26, 2018 – 11:00 a.m.

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call
4. Commission Special Announcements / Personal Privilege
5. Receive and Consider a Declaration of Emergency to Modify 2018 Private Recreational Red Snapper Season in State and Federal Waters
6. Public Comments
7. Adjournment

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF
LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION

Tuesday, June 26, 2018

A special meeting of the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission was **Called to Order** at 11:00 a.m. on June 26, 2018, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana at the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Headquarters Building in the Louisiana Room by **Chairman Samanie**.

Commissioner Yakupzack led the **Pledge of Allegiance**.

Chairman Samanie asked for the **Roll Call**. The following Commissioners were present:

Bobby Samanie
Al Sunseri
Chad Courville
Joe McPherson
Bart Yakupzack

Secretary Jack Montoucet was also present.

Commissioners Bill Hogan and Jerri Smitko were absent from the meeting.

There were no **Commission Special Announcements/Personal Privilege** heard at this meeting.

Chairman Samanie then asked Mr. Jason Adriance, Fisheries Biologist, to come forward for the agenda item, **Receive and Consider a Declaration of Emergency to Modify 2018 Private Recreational Red Snapper Season in State and Federal Waters**. Mr. Adriance explained the Declaration of Emergency passed by the Commission at their May 2018 Meeting. Staff felt it was prudent to update the Commission on what was being seen in the landings. A graph was displayed which showed the 7-day week projections and a projection for a possible 3-day weekend season, which could begin July 1, 2018. Both options have the quota being reached the week of July 9, 2018 or soon thereafter. Mr. Adriance discussed the pros and cons to continuing with the 7-day week season (allow for a full week of fishing during July 4th holiday week and less interruption of anglers plans and reservations). He further stated that the July 4th week was typically one of the higher landings and could exceed the average summer landings by 66%. Then Mr. Adriance talked about the pros and cons for having a 3-day weekend only season with the holiday included. The landings table showed that weeks 24 and 25 were fished but no estimates were known yet. Mr. Adriance felt that once the landings for those weeks were known, the quota landings could reach two-thirds or three-fourths of the quota, considering the average weekly landings was 91,000 pounds. Early ROLP response rates and voluntary reporting indicate a potential decrease in effort for week 24 but it appears to be going back up.

Mr. Adriance emphasized there is no correlation between the ROLP early response rates and landings estimate. To date, there have been 33 days of fishing but 15 days of landings have not been received, so if you try to run the landings on a daily level, the imprecision can be greatly increased. Currently, the average red snapper weight for the private angler is 8.2 pounds, while the charter average is 9.8 pounds. **Commissioner Courville** asked what was the average for private recreational anglers and Mr. Adriance stated it was about 8 pounds. Charts comparing weekday fishing versus weekend fishing for years 2014 until current was shown for private anglers and offshore charter trips. **Commissioner McPherson** asked Mr. Adriance if the weekend included just Saturday and Sunday and he was told it was Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The projection graph shows the 7-day week season was projected to almost reach the quota during the week of July 9 and for the 3-day weekend projections, the quota could be reached by week 29. Again, Mr. Adriance noted these are strictly projections based on harvest rates. Recapping, harvest this year was ahead of the 2017 average but closer to the last 3-years average and projections indicate the quota could be met by July 9th. The two options were again stated by Mr. Adriance. (A copy of Mr. Adriance's presentation is included in the Appendices Section of the Minutes.)

Following the presentation, **Commissioner McPherson** asked to clarify when the quota may be reached – by July 9th or the week of July 9th and Mr. Adriance apologized and stated it could occur sometime during that week of July 9th but mentioned that the week of July 4th is a wild card with there being typically higher landings. **Chairman Samanie** asked if the Declaration of Emergency followed the second option and he was told that it would follow the 3-day weekend option with the July 4th holiday included. **Commissioner Sunseri** asked, if the decision was made to go with the 3-day weekend option and open on July 4th, the quota would be exceeded by mid-July to which Mr. Adriance felt fishing would go through July 9th and during the week of July 16th the quota would be exceeded. **Commissioner Sunseri** stated his concern was the weekend after July 4th and wondered if the season should be closed after that and hoped the landings were underestimated. He then asked what would happen if the quota was exceeded and Mr. Adriance stated there would be a pay back next year. **Commissioner Sunseri** commented he wanted to be very clear on what the Commission may vote on and what the possible consequences could be. **Commissioner Yakupzack** asked if the data difference was known comparing the 3-day weekend (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) versus the 2-day weekend (Saturday and Sunday). Mr. Adriance mentioned the Friday effort was 30% of the weekend effort. **Chairman Samanie** asked if a 2-day weekend option could happen based on the May 2018 Declaration of Emergency. **Commissioner Yakupzack** then asked to be refreshed on what may happen if other states exceeded their allotment and the total Gulf poundage was exceeded and Mr. Adriance explained that each state has a pay-back provision and if the entire Gulfwide quota was exceeded, the Magnuson Act says the season could be shut down. However, he felt with the state's pay-back, there was not a high probability of that happening since each state was being held accountable through their EFP's. Secretary Montoucet cautioned the Commission when talking about 2-day weekends noting those people that would fish on Friday would probably fish on Saturday or Sunday. He then asked the Commission to be careful with their options so there are no problems when staff begins analyzing data for next year. The Secretary then talked about how the 2017 season was "dropped" on anglers and thought maybe fishing did not occur right away. **Commissioner Yakupzack** appreciated the Secretary's comments and stated he preferred the 3-day weekend versus a 2-day weekend as you may have a 30% greater

chance of having a calm day. He did add that the fishermen from southwest Louisiana that has contacted him have enjoyed the season. **Commissioner Yakupzack** then offered for discussion to leave the season as it is, a 7-day week season through July 8 and then go to a 3-day weekend after that so it would not upset anglers during the holiday week. **Commissioner McPherson** agreed with **Commissioner Yakupzack** in going through the 4th of July holiday week, but asked what was the lag time on knowing what quota was left. He suggested saving that quota and using it for the Labor Day holiday weekend. Mr. Adriance commented the numbers for the holiday week still would not be in and the high holiday week could put you over the quota. **Commissioner Courville** mentioned the EFP was a 2-year cycle and if this year was being considered a study year, then he was not as concerned about going over the quota within reason in 2018 as he would in 2019. **Commissioner McPherson** felt it would show good prudence on the state's part in not going over the allocation as opposed to being in the negative. He then wondered, if there is a weekend's quota left, would it be best to use it the next weekend or on a weekend when more people would enjoy fishing. **Commissioner Sunseri** agreed with **Commissioners McPherson and Yakupzack** in closing the season after July 8 and then see where the landing numbers with LA Creel are after that. **Commissioner Courville** agreed and reminded everyone there will be a Commission Meeting in August and there will be a report on updated landings and felt the suggestion by **Commissioner McPherson** would let the public know what they can expect or cannot expect for the Labor Day holiday. He noted he was in favor of the 7-day season until after the 4th of July weekend and then go to the 3-day weekend season. **Commissioner McPherson** asked **Commissioner Courville** for clarification on what he was wanting, was it to go to 3-day weekends after July 8 and **Commissioner Courville** answered yes. **Commissioner McPherson** stated the quota numbers will not be known if you go with a 3-day weekend season after July 8 unless his suggestion to have a delay was given which will allow the Department the opportunity to update the numbers. **Commissioner Courville** did not think the next week's data would indicate 93,000 pounds of fish were caught and he felt setting the season in stone was not the best course of action. He agreed to going with a 3-day weekend season after July 4th week and giving the Secretary authority to make the adjustments if he sees the quota was close. **Commissioner McPherson** asked if the data would be available by the July Commission Meeting to which Mr. Adriance stated the data for week 24 would be available this Thursday. **Commissioner McPherson** felt the Commission could make a season change at the July Commission Meeting if the quota allocation was there. He then asked if the Secretary had any additional input. Secretary Montoucet commented the Department was waiting on the data; he added that he knew the winds offshore the prior weekend were strong and the seas were high which will impact the numbers. Mr. Adriance noted week 25 was a good week for fishing but not necessarily week 24. Secretary Montoucet stated that the fishermen will not have the expectation of having a season and booking trips if the Commission follows **Commissioner McPherson's** suggestion. He liked the idea of having the season run through July 8; however, Louisiana has been recognized as knowing what we are doing and not exceeding a quota. The Secretary also stated that staff could talk with anglers and see if they want to hold it until the Labor Day weekend if there was fish still available. **Commissioner Yakupzack** thought everyone agreed with running the season through July 8, and then at the July Commission Meeting when there will be an additional week of data, discuss this again and maybe decide from there which direction to go, such as putting a weekend in July, one in August and one for Labor Day weekend. He further commented he was not comfortable with closing the season on July 8 and no fishing occur again until the Labor Day weekend. **Commissioner**

McPherson liked the suggestion but did not feel all of the data would be available, and asked Mr. Adriance when would the data from the week ending July 8 be available and he was told that would be available 10 days later. **Commissioner McPherson** wanted to close the season on July 8 and then allow fishing the first weekend of August and the first weekend of September if the pounds would allow and made that a motion for discussion. **Commissioner Sunseri** seconded the motion with the Secretary having the authority to open the season on whatever weekends might be good to go fishing. He agreed with closing the season on July 8 and reevaluate the options. **Commissioner Sunseri** believed in the Department and Secretary to make good decisions so Louisiana can get the most out of the season. **Commissioner McPherson** clarified his motion to have the season go through July 8, close the season and give the Secretary the authority to open based on the quota limit by opening it the first weekend of August and then if some quota was still available, open the first weekend of September which will allow the public the opportunity to plan for trips understanding the season will close when the quota was reached. **Commissioner Courville** asked if the motion would allow the Secretary to go beyond those 2 months if there was still quota available and **Commissioner McPherson** mentioned the Commission will have met twice in that period of time. **Commissioner McPherson** added his motion was to open the season the first weekend of every month until the quota was filled. **Commissioner Yakupzack** stated he was in support of Commissioner McPherson's suggestion. He added he also agreed with the biologists that LA Creel is "one bad dude" and his intent was to extend effort by whatever makes sense for the anglers. Before voting, **Commissioner McPherson** asked if the Commission should be prudent and go with a 2-day weekend if there was available quota. Secretary Montoucet confirmed that if he was given the authority on setting the season, he would try to get every pound of fish possible. **Commissioner Courville** wondered if the Declaration of Emergency on the table would supersede the previous Declaration of Emergency and the Commission can give the Secretary whatever authority they wanted. **Commissioner McPherson** felt it would probably be a 3-day weekend and then close the season when the quota was about to be reached. **Commissioner Courville** liked the idea of giving the Secretary the authority to go to 2-day or 1-day if the science and staff would advise.

Mr. Steve Leonard, Clinton, Louisiana, asked if the amberjack quota had been met and Mr. Adriance stated the season has been restructured and the new quota year will reopen in August. Mr. Leonard commented, as a recreational fisherman, he would be in favor of catching amberjack and red snapper and he felt that was the direction the Commission was going. He likes to fish Fridays and Saturdays and thought it would be cheaper to get a hotel room for the night.

Mr. Ben Graham began thanking Mr. Adriance for LA Creel and wondered if the lag time was 10 days and he was told yes. Since he was in Grand Isle the prior 2 weekends, he also felt the landings would be lower. Mr. Graham thanked the Commission for their action and noted he liked the 3-day weekend.

The motion passed with no opposition.

(The full text of the Declaration of Emergency is made a part of the record.)

DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY

Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Wildlife and Fisheries Commission

Modification of the 2018 Private Recreational Red Snapper Season

June 26, 2018

Louisiana's private recreational red snapper season was previously set by the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission at its regular meeting on May 3, 2018 to be open daily beginning on May 25, 2018. LA Creel data indicate that harvest rates are such that the state recreational allocation will be met soon without action to modify the current structure of the recreational season. One method to extend that season is to limit fishing to weekends only.

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 in accordance with the Declaration of Emergency passed by the Commission on May 3, 2018 which set the private recreational red snapper season, the Commission hereby declares:

The season for the recreational harvest of red snapper in Louisiana state waters shall close at 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, July 8, 2018, and re-open thereafter as follows:

The recreational harvest of red snapper in Louisiana state waters shall be for weekends only (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) on the first weekend of every month beginning with August 3, 2018. 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 Louisiana EFP that allows for take within State and Federal waters out to 200 nautical miles.

The Commission further authorizes the Secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, upon notification of the Chairman of the Commission, to modify the recreational season for the harvest of red snapper in accordance with the provisions of the Louisiana EFP when LA Creel data warrant a season modification to ensure compliance with the allocation of red snapper indicated in the Louisiana EFP.

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

Robert J. Samanie, III
Chairman

Chairman Samanie then asked for any additional **Public Comments** and none were heard.

Commissioner Courville made a motion for **Adjournment** and was unanimously approved.

APPENDICES



2018 Recreational Red Snapper Season Update

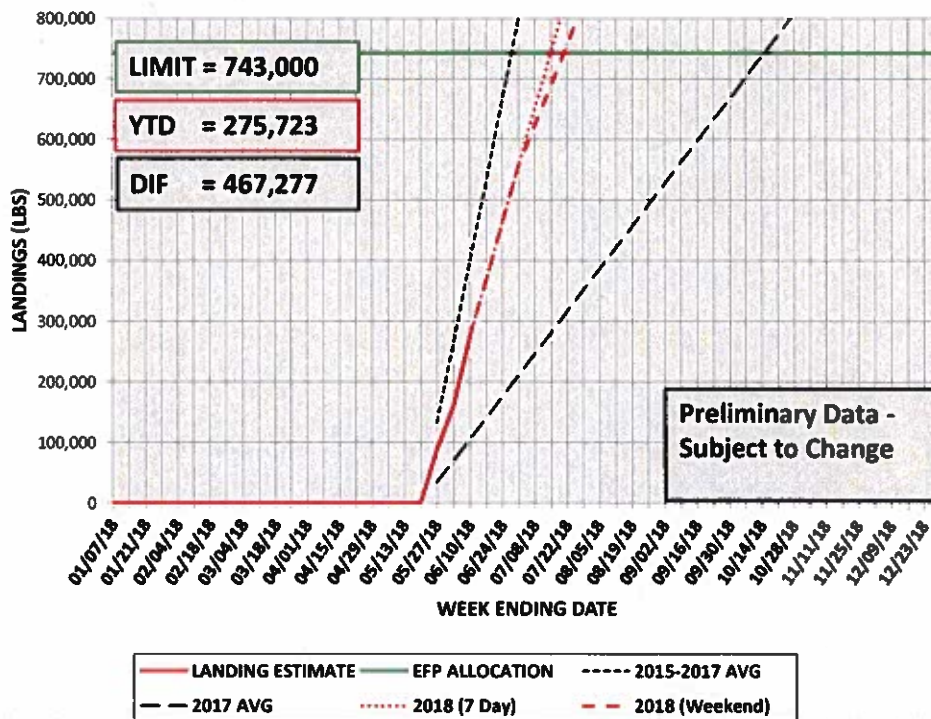
Jason Adriance | Wildlife and Fisheries Commission Meeting | June 26, 2018

Declaration of Emergency from May 3, 2018

- Should weekly La Creel data indicate landing rates that would not allow for the 2018 red snapper season to extend to the Labor Day Holiday weekend, the LWFC will reconvene and make an adjustment to the 2018 red snapper season to three day weekends and holidays...
- The Secretary of Wildlife and Fisheries has the authority to make every reasonable attempt to close the season on the nearest Sunday (or holiday) prior to when the 743,000 pounds red snapper landings estimate established by La Creel is projected to be met...



**LOUISIANA'S 2018 RED SNAPPER LANDING ESTIMATES
(LA CREEL - PRIVATE ANGLER + STATE CHARTER)**



We are projected to meet the quota by the week of July 9.
Weekend only projections start July 1.

No Action – Continue with 7 Day Season

- Pros
 - Allow anglers to fish over the entire holiday week
 - Less disruption of plans and reservations made for both business and private interests
- Cons
 - Potential to end the season after the holiday
 - Holiday effort may increase harvest rates as 4th of July week can exceed average summer landings by as much as 66%



Three Day Weekends Only – with Holiday

- Pros
 - May provide one more weekend of fishing
 - Consistent with past seasons
 - Allows harvest estimates to be generated with a break in fishing prior to the next weekend
- Cons
 - Mid week holiday may cause confusion among anglers
 - Disrupts holiday week reservations and plans



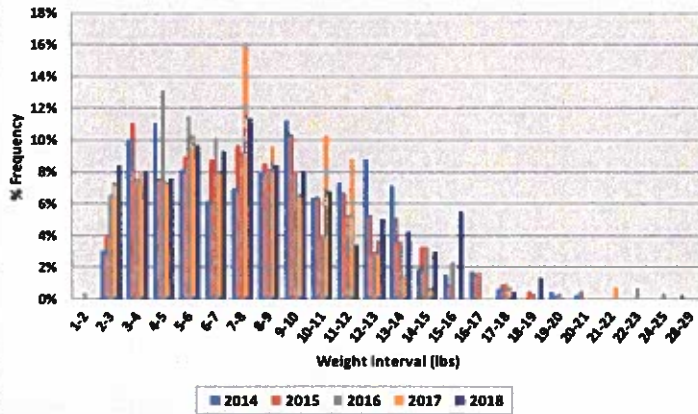
2018 Red Snapper Weekly Landing Estimates								
Week	Begin Date	End Date	Landings (lbs)				Running Total	Running % of Allocation
			State Charter	Private Angler	Total	Weeks % of Allocation		
*21	5/21/2018	5/27/2018	2,128	86,985	89,113	12%	89,113	12%
22	5/28/2018	6/3/2018	3,064	67,792	70,856	10%	159,969	22%
23	6/4/2018	6/10/2018	5,894	109,860	115,754	16%	275,723	38%
24	6/11/2018	6/17/2018						
25	6/18/2018	6/24/2018						
26	6/25/2018	7/1/2018						
27	7/2/2018	7/8/2018						
28	7/9/2018	7/15/2018						
Average Weekly Landing			3,695	88,212	91,907	13%		

*Week 21 season only open on 25th, 26th, and 27th (3 days)

Early ROLP response rates and voluntary reporting indicate a potential decrease in effort for week 24. **However, there is no correlation between the ROLP early response rates and landings estimates. EFP reporting data will need to be further analyzed after the season to determine if any correlations or conclusions can be made between declared trips and effort.**



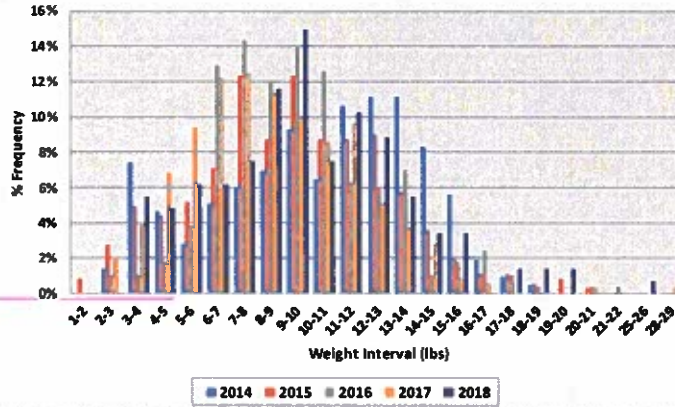
Red Snapper Biological Samples for the Months May & June
Private Angler Weight Distribution (lbs)



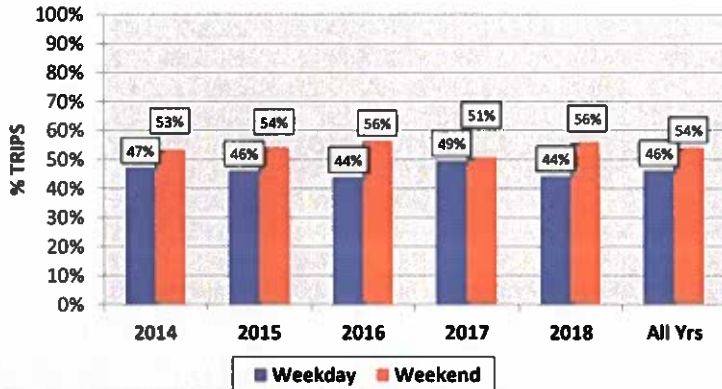
2018
Private Average 8.2 lbs

2018
Charter Average 9.8 lbs

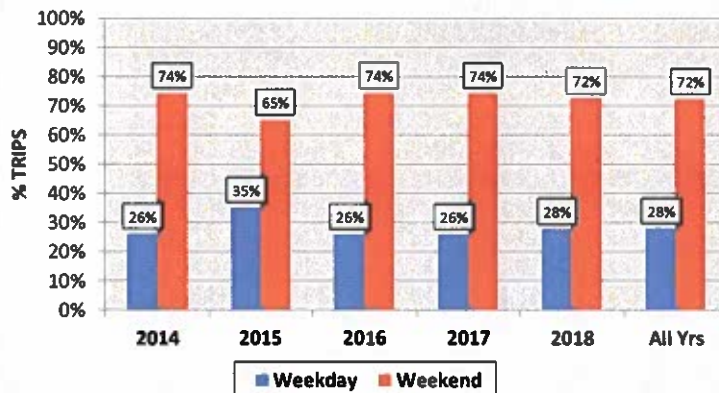
Red Snapper Biological Samples for the Months May & June
Charter Weight Distribution (lbs)



Offshore Charter Trips by Day_Type



Offshore Private Angler Trips by Day_Type



Week	Start	End	7 Day Projection	Weekend Projection
23	6/4/2018	6/10/2018	275,722	275,722
24	6/11/2018	6/17/2018	369,027	369,027
25	6/18/2018	6/24/2018	462,332	462,332
26	6/25/2018	7/1/2018	555,637	555,637
27	7/2/2018	7/8/2018	648,942	622,010
28	7/9/2018	7/15/2018	742,247	688,384
29	7/16/2018	7/22/2018	835,552	754,757
30	7/23/2018	7/29/2018	928,857	821,131
31	7/30/2018	8/5/2018	1,022,162	887,504
32	8/6/2018	8/12/2018	1,115,467	953,877
33	8/13/2018	8/19/2018	1,115,467	953,877

Projections are inherently uncertain and based upon harvest rates we have seen. Original pre-season projections were as follows:

Daily Season (15-17 avg) - June 24

Weekends Only (15-17 avg) - July 8

Daily Season (2017 avg) - October 14

Weekends Only (2017 avg) - December 2



Recap

Harvest is ahead of the 2017 average and closer to the last 3 years (15-17) average and projections indicate the quota could be met the week of July 9.

Options are:

Status quo and allow the Secretary to close when LA Creel data indicates the 743,000 pound quota will be met. This could be very soon.

Modify the season to a 3 day weekend only season, including the day of July 4th allowing the Secretary to close when LA Creel data indicates the 743,000 pound quota will be met. This option may provide one more weekend of harvest.



Questions?

