

NOTICE OF INTENT

Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Wildlife and Fisheries Commission

Recreational Alligator Hunting Season (LAC 76:V.703)

The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission hereby give notice of their intent to adopt LAC 76:V.703 to establish a recreational alligator hunting season. The proposed Rule creates a controlled recreational harvest opportunity for resident hunters, separate from the existing commercial alligator program, based upon availability of alligator resource and increasing public recreational opportunity. The program is designed to increase public engagement in wildlife management, address landowner concerns regarding nuisance or overabundant alligators, and maintain population sustainability through limited lottery tag issuance, zone-based distribution, mandatory reporting, and a strict prohibition on the commercial sale or movement of recreationally harvested alligators, hides, meat, and parts.

The secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is authorized to take any and all necessary steps on behalf of the commission to promulgate and effectuate this notice of intent, including but not limited to, the filing of the fiscal and economic impact statement, the filing of the notice of intent, and compiling public comments and submissions for the commission's review and consideration. In the absence of any further action by the commission following an opportunity to consider all public comments regarding the proposed rule, the secretary is authorized and directed to prepare and transmit a summary report to the legislative oversight committees and promulgate the final rule.

Title 76

WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES

Part V. Wild Quadrupeds and Wild Birds

Chapter 7. Alligators

§703. Recreational Alligator Hunting Season

A. The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries does hereby establish regulations governing the recreational harvest of wild populations of alligators.

1. Purpose. These regulations are to govern the statewide recreational taking and possession of wild alligators. They are being enacted to prevent depletion or waste, while enhancing the utilization of this renewable resource. These regulations provide rules to the methods of recreational alligator harvest.

2. Definitions. The following words and phrases for purposes of these regulations shall have the meaning ascribed to them in this section, unless the context wherein the particular word or phrase is used clearly indicates a different meaning:

Alligator—American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*).

Alligator Carcass Remains—the inedible portions of an alligator (including but not limited to bones, viscera, head and offal) after legal removal of the hide and any meat or alligator part intended for either personal consumption or personal use.

Alligator Hide—whole or partial alligator skins, flanks, chalecos and bellies (including those bellies attached to or separated from the tail portion of the alligator skin). Once the tail portion of the skin is separated from the flanks, chaleco and belly, the tail is considered an alligator part.

Alligator Part—any part of the carcass of an alligator, except the hide and includes the bony dorsum plates, if detached from the tagged alligator hide.

Bona Fide Resident (Resident)—any person who has resided in the state of Louisiana continuously during the six months immediately prior to the date on which he applies

for any license and who has manifested his intent to remain in this state by establishing Louisiana as his legal domicile in accordance with R.S. 56:8(17)(b).

Commission—the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission.

Confiscation—the exercise of a right under the police power wherein property is seized and held pending court order if the seized material is nonperishable, or disposed of without judicial intervention if perishable.

Department—the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF).

Eligible Property—privately owned properties for which access has been granted for the recreational harvesting of alligators as evidenced by proof of ownership or written permission from the landowner, and designated public waterbodies, state lands, state wildlife management areas, state parks, and national wildlife refuges. This excludes properties that are already issued commercial alligator harvest tags.

Free Shooting—a method of harvesting alligators where hunters use firearms to shoot alligators that are swimming freely, rather than those already restrained by hook-and-line.

Hook—any curved or bent device attached to a line or pole for the purpose of taking alligators.

Hook and Line—baited hooks suspended over water to catch alligators

Hunt—in different tenses, attempting to take.

Landowner—any person who owns land eligible for recreational alligator harvest.

Open Season—that period of time set by the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission, during which wild alligators may be lawfully taken recreationally.

Pole Hunting—the act of taking an alligator from a den with a hook pole or snagging device of any type and includes using such devices to induce an alligator to move from a den prior to taking.

Possess—in its different tenses, the act of having in possession or control, keeping, detaining, restraining, or holding as owner, or as agent, bailee, or custodian for another.

Recreational Alligator Hunter—a properly licensed resident or nonresident person who takes wild alligators recreationally, not for commercial purposes.

Recreational Hide Tag (Hide Tag)—an official serially numbered, No-Sale, nontransferable, CITES-format tag issued by the department for recreational hunting of alligators. Recreational hide tags shall be distinct in color and formatted as LA[YY]-N[Z][NNNN], where “N” denotes a no-sale tag, “[Z]” denotes a letter corresponding to the recreational alligator harvest zone in which the tag is valid, and “[NNNN]” is a unique serial number. Recreational hide tags shall retain CITES format solely to allow traceability if the hunter elects to have the hide tanned for personal use and to permit the tag to be scanned; no CITES export certificate shall be issued for any alligator, hide, or part taken under a recreational hide tag.

Snatch Hook—casting a weighted treble hook to snag an alligator.

Take—in its different tenses, the attempt or act of hooking, pursuing, netting, capturing, snaring, trapping, shooting, hunting, wounding, or killing by any means or device.

Tanning—the conversion of alligator skins into an intermediate or finished form and includes the following: crust tanning alligator leather, dyeing alligator leather, glazing alligator leather, and includes the dressing of hides.

3. General Rules

- a. No person shall take or possess alligators, except as provided in these regulations and Title 56.
- b. No alligator shall be taken recreationally unless by a properly licensed recreational alligator hunter in possession of department-issued recreational hide tags,

during open season, from eligible property with written evidence of land ownership or permission from the landowner.

c. Each alligator, alligator hide, or alligator part taken or possessed in violation of these regulations shall constitute a separate offense.

d. Alligators or hides of alligators harvested in Louisiana shall be tagged. Any deviation from those requirements shall be a violation and subject hides to confiscation. Violation of this Subparagraph is a Class Four violation as described in Title 56.

e. A recreational alligator hunter shall possess on his person one or more valid recreational hide tags issued for the season and alligator harvest zone in which hunting occurs, along with written evidence of land ownership or permission from the landowner. Possession of recreational hide tags for a single recreational alligator hunter may satisfy the requirement of another hunter(s) when they are engaged in a joint hunting operation.

f. Except as provided for in Subparagraph 5.h. below, no person shall release any alligator from any taking device for any purpose without first dispatching the alligator. After the alligator is removed from the taking device the recreational hide tag shall be properly attached immediately upon possession, and the alligator removed from the harvest area. Violation of this Subparagraph is a Class Four violation as described in Title 56.

g. Alligators, alligator hides, alligator meat, and alligator parts taken under a recreational hide tag shall not be sold, bartered, exchanged for anything of value, or otherwise entered into commercial channels, and shall not be commingled with alligators, hides, meat, or parts taken under a commercial harvest tag. Any person engaged in the tanning of hides, processing of alligator meat or receipt of alligator parts shall identify recreational hide tags by the tag format and color described in Paragraph 2 of this Section and shall not accept alligators, hides,

meat, or parts taken under a recreational hide tag for sale or for entry into commerce. Violation of this Subparagraph is a Class Four violation as described in Title 56.

h. A recreational alligator hunter may give alligator parts to anyone for personal use. Any part of an alligator shall have affixed thereto the name, address, date, recreational hide tag number, and the LDWF number of the person donating the alligator part(s). This information shall be legibly written and attached to the part(s) or to the container enclosing the part or parts. This information must remain affixed until the part(s) has been stored at the domicile of the possessor. Violation of this Subparagraph is a Class Three violation as described in Title 56.

i. Per R.S. 56:280, white or albino alligators are protected and therefore prohibited from take except as allowed by special permit from the department. It shall be a violation if any person intentionally takes from the wild any alligator that is white or albino by any means. Any person who unintentionally takes from the wild any alligator that is white or albino by hook and line shall immediately report its presence and location to the department. Department personnel of the Office of Wildlife will on a case-by-case basis determine the disposition of any such white or albino alligator which is unintentionally hooked. Violation of R.S. 56:280 shall subject the violator to a fine of not less than \$10,000 and imprisonment for not less than 6 months or more than 12 months, or both.

j. Alligator hides or parts may be shipped out of state for personal tanning or taxidermy. The hide or parts to be shipped shall be accompanied with a possession tag containing the date of harvest, recreational hide tag number and the LDWF customer number of the alligator hunter. Alligator hides, meat or parts shall be prohibited from being shipped outside of the United States. Violation of this Subparagraph is a Class Three violation as described in Title 56.

k. Recreational hide tags are nontransferable. A recreational hide tag may be used only by the lottery-selected recreational alligator hunter to whom the tag was issued, and shall not be sold, assigned, transferred, gifted, loaned, bartered, or otherwise conveyed to any other person. Violation of this Subparagraph is a Class Four violation as described in Title 56.

l. No recreational alligator hunter shall conduct, advertise, offer, or participate in a guided alligator hunt utilizing a recreational hide tag. Alligators taken under a recreational hide tag shall not be harvested in connection with any guide service, outfitter service, or other service for which a fee, consideration, or anything of value is charged, paid, or received. Violation of this Subparagraph is a Class Three violation as described in Title 56.

m. Disposal of Alligator Carcass Remains. Any person who harvests an alligator under a recreational hide tag shall dispose of the alligator carcass remains in a sanitary manner by cremation, burial or other sanitary method recommended by LDWF, so as not to create a public nuisance. Disposal of Alligator Carcass remains in any public lands, rights-of-way, or waterbodies is strictly prohibited. LDWF shall provide educational materials on its website for licensed alligator hunters on approved disposal methods and best practices. Violations of this Subparagraph shall also be subject to penalties for littering, including but not limited to fines, restitution for cleanup costs and forfeiture of eligibility for participation in future recreational alligator season lotteries. Each improperly disposed alligator carcass shall be a separate violation. Violation of this Subparagraph is a Class Two violation as described in Title 56.

n. Prohibition on Wanton Waste. No person shall wantonly waste or cause to be wasted any alligator taken under the provisions of this Section. For purposes of this Subparagraph, “wanton waste” means: (i) the failure to make a reasonable effort to retrieve any alligator that has been hooked, wounded, or killed, and to retain such alligator in the hunter’s possession; (ii) the intentional abandonment, discarding, or leaving to decay of the edible meat of a

harvested alligator, except for inedible portions, viscera, bones, hides, and skeletal remains; or (iii) the taking of an alligator without the intent to reduce it to possession for personal use in accordance with these regulations. Each recreational alligator hunter shall take all reasonable steps to recover any alligator hooked, wounded, or killed and to care for the edible meat of any alligator harvested so as to prevent spoilage or waste. Violation of this Subparagraph is a Class Three violation as described in Title 56.

4. Licenses, Permits and Fees

a. The licenses and fees required for activities authorized by these regulations are as prescribed under provisions of Title 56, or as prescribed in these regulations, and are:

- i. Recreational Alligator Hunting License—\$25;
- ii. Nonresident Recreational Alligator Hunting License—\$150.

b. All alligator hunting licenses described above expire annually on December 31.

c. No person may take, attempt to take, or possess a wild alligator in this state during the open season for taking wild alligators unless he or she has acquired and possesses a basic hunting license and a recreational alligator hunter's license. A recreational alligator hunter must have in their possession a valid basic hunting license (or equivalent privilege), a recreational alligator hunting license, valid recreational hide tag(s) to take or possess wild alligators, along with written evidence of land ownership or permission from the landowner.

Violation of this Subparagraph is a Class Three violation as described in Title 56.

5. Wild Harvest Methods

a. Alligators taken from the wild may be dispatched or removed from hook and line, or snatch hook, only during daylight hours between official sunrise and official sunset. Violation of this Subparagraph is a Class Four violation as described in Title 56.

b. There are no size restrictions on wild alligators taken during the recreational season.

c. Alligators shall only be taken via hook and line or snatch hook, provided that the hook and line or snatch hook is anchored, tethered, or originating from immovable eligible property with written evidence of land ownership or permission from the landowner to recreationally hunt alligators has been granted.

d. Pole hunting and free shooting is prohibited.

e. A firearm or bang stick shall be used to dispatch alligators after it has been taken on hook and line. An alligator that has been secured to a line anchored, tethered, or originating from immovable eligible property may be dispatched from a boat.

f. Hunters are limited to setting two lines per unused tag. All lines must be labeled with hunter's LDWF customer number on weatherproof material.

g. Hooks may be used only when a line of at least 300 pound test is securely attached to the hook in such a manner to prevent separation from the hook until the carcass is retrieved. The other end of the line must be attached to eligible immovable property. Violation of this Subparagraph is a Class Three violation as described in Title 56.

h. Alligator hunters shall inspect their hooks and lines and remove captured alligators daily. All hooks and lines shall be removed when an alligator hunter's quota is reached. In the event an alligator is hooked and the hunter's quota has been reached the hunter must release the alligator in the most humane method possible. Violation of this Subparagraph is a Class Three violation as described in Title 56.

i. Baited hooks and lines may be set no more than 24 hours prior to the open season and shall be removed no later than sunset of the last day of the open season. Violation of this Subparagraph is a Class Three violation as described in Title 56.

6. Recreational Alligator Season Lottery

a. Recreational hide tags shall be issued through a lottery.

b. Only bona fide residents age 16 and older who are hunter education certified shall be eligible to apply for and be selected in the recreational alligator harvest lottery. A nonresident may participate in a recreational alligator hunt only while in the physical presence of the lottery-winning recreational alligator hunter to whom the recreational hide tag(s) being used were issued, and shall possess a valid Nonresident Basic Hunting License (or equivalent privilege) and a Nonresident Recreational Alligator Hunting License.

c. The recreational alligator lottery may provide a maximum of 5,000 recreational alligator hunting opportunities (10,000 recreational hide tags).

d. Successful recreational alligator lottery applicants will be issued two recreational hide tags for each of their awarded alligator hunting zone lottery applications upon acceptance.

e. If any recreational alligator hunter is cited for hunting alligators out of season, or at night, or on property other than eligible property for which permission has been granted, all unused recreational hide tags and alligators in their possession shall be confiscated and the violator's recreational alligator hunting license shall be revoked and eligibility to participate in future recreational alligator harvests shall be forfeited for a period of 5 years. Additionally, violators will be subject to civil restitution for the value of an American alligator. Violation of this Subparagraph is a Class Four violation as described in Title 56.

7. Recreational Alligator Harvest Zones

a. Recreational alligator hunting opportunities may be distributed annually into eight zones statewide as described below. Tag allotment and distribution shall be determined by the department each season.

i. Recreational Alligator Harvest Zone A—Eligible properties located within DeSoto, Caddo, Bossier, Red River, Bienville, Webster, and Claiborne parishes for which access has been granted for the recreational harvesting of alligators. This management zone includes the following properties where LDWF is authorized to manage alligator hunting opportunities: Loggy Bayou WMA, Soda Lake WMA, Bayou Pierre WMA, and John Franks WMA. Some of these properties may be subject to specific area restrictions. Properties with existing alligator harvest programs that are already issued commercial harvest tags are excluded.

ii. Recreational Alligator Harvest Zone B—Eligible properties located within Union, Lincoln, Jackson, Caldwell, Ouachita, Morehouse, Richland, Franklin, Tensas, Madison, East Carroll, and West Carroll parishes for which access has been granted for the recreational harvesting of alligators. This management zone includes the following properties where LDWF is authorized to manage alligator hunting opportunities: Big Colewa Bayou WMA (Bearskin Unit) and Bayou Macon WMA. Some of these properties may be subject to specific area restrictions. Properties with existing alligator harvest programs that are already issued commercial harvest tags are excluded.

iii. Recreational Alligator Harvest Zone C—Eligible properties located within Sabine, Vernon, Natchitoches, Winn, Grant, Rapides, Avoyelles, Concordia, LaSalle, and Catahoula parishes for which access has been granted for the recreational harvesting of alligators. This management zone includes the following properties where LDWF is authorized to manage alligator hunting opportunities: Sabine WMA, Pomme de Terre WMA, Little River WMA, J.C. “Sonny” Gilbert WMA, Elbow Slough WMA, Clear Creek WMA, Walnut Hill WMA,

Alexander State Forest WMA, and portion of Acadiana Conservation Corridor in Avoyelles and Rapides parishes. Some of these properties may be subject to specific area restrictions. Properties with existing alligator harvest programs that are already issued commercial harvest tags are excluded.

iv. Recreational Alligator Harvest Zone D—Eligible properties located within St. Landry, Lafayette, Iberia, Pointe Coupee, West Baton Rouge, Iberville, and Upper St. Martin parishes for which access has been granted for the recreational harvesting of alligators. This management zone includes the following properties where LDWF is authorized to manage alligator hunting opportunities: Thistlethwaite WMA and portion of Acadiana Conservation Corridor in St. Landry Parish. Some of these properties may be subject to specific area restrictions. Properties with existing alligator harvest programs that are already issued commercial harvest tags are excluded.

v. Recreational Alligator Harvest Zone E—Eligible properties located within Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, Allen, Jefferson Davis, Vermilion, Evangeline, and Acadia parishes for which access has been granted for the recreational harvesting of alligators. This management zone includes the following properties where LDWF is authorized to manage alligator hunting opportunities: portion of Acadiana Conservation Corridor in Evangeline Parish, Flatwoods Savannah WMA, West Bay WMA, and Marsh Bayou WMA. Some of these properties may be subject to specific area restrictions. Properties with existing alligator harvest programs that are already issued commercial harvest tags are excluded.

vi. Recreational Alligator Harvest Zone F—Eligible properties located within St. Mary, Lower St. Martin, Assumption, St. James, Lafourche, and Terrebonne parishes for which access has been granted for the recreational harvesting of alligators. Properties

with existing alligator harvest programs that are already issued commercial harvest tags are excluded.

vii. Recreational Alligator Harvest Zone G—Eligible properties located within West Feliciana, East Feliciana, St. Helena, Tangipahoa, Washington, East Baton Rouge, Livingston, and Ascension parishes for which access has been granted for the recreational harvesting of alligators. This management zone includes the following properties where LDWF is authorized to manage alligator hunting opportunities: Tunica Hills WMA and Bogue Chitto WMA. Some of these properties may be subject to specific area restrictions. Properties with existing alligator harvest programs that are already issued commercial harvest tags are excluded.

viii. Recreational Alligator Harvest Zone H—Eligible properties located within St. Tammany, St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, Orleans, St. Charles, and St. John the Baptist parishes for which access has been granted for the recreational harvesting of alligators. Properties with existing alligator harvest programs that are already issued commercial harvest tags are excluded.

b. Recreational Alligator Harvest Zone Season Dates:

i. Recreational Alligator Harvest for all Zones—October 1 through October 31.

8. Tagging and Reporting Requirements

a. A recreational hide tag shall be properly attached and locked using the tag's locking device in the alligator's tail immediately upon harvest. In the event that a recreational hide tag contains a factory defect rendering it unusable for the purpose intended, the hunter shall notify the department.

b. Within 72 hours the hunter shall validate the harvest. The hunter shall report the recreational hide tag number, length of alligator, date of the harvest, and parish of harvest.

c. Hunters may validate recreationally harvested alligators by utilizing the department web portal or department web portal via LA Wallet or by calling the validation toll free number, 225-267-9998 or using the validation website: www.louisianaOutdoors.com.

d. Hunters that fail to validate their harvested alligators will be prohibited from future participation in the recreational alligator hunting lottery.

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. _____.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Wildlife and Fisheries Commission, LR

Family Impact Statement

In accordance with Act 1183 of 1999 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature, the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Wildlife and Fisheries Commission hereby issues its Family Impact Statement in connection with the preceding Notice of Intent. This Notice of Intent will have no impact on the six criteria set out at R.S. 49:972(B).

Poverty Impact Statement

This proposed Rule will have no impact on poverty as described in R.S. 49:973.

Provider Impact Statement

This proposed Rule has no known impact on providers as described in HCR 170 of 2014.

Small Business Analysis

This proposed Rule has no known economic impact on small businesses as described in R.S. 49:965.2 through R.S. 49:965.8.

Public Comments

Interested persons may submit written comments relative to the proposed Rule until June 26, 2026 to Jeb Linscombe, Alligator Program Biologist, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, 200 Dulles Drive, Lafayette, LA, 70506, or via e-mail to jlinscombe@wlf.la.gov.

Kenneth A. “Andy” Brister

Chairman