

# MEMORANDUM



**To:** Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners  
**From:** Jessica McCawley, Director, Marine Fisheries Management  
**Date:** October 2, 2019  
**Subject:** Consent Agenda: Northeast Florida Shrimp – Final Public Hearing

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**Purpose:**

Obtain final approval for rule amendments modifying regulations for the commercial food shrimp fishery in Northeast Florida found in 68B-31, Florida Administrative Code (FAC).

**Summary:**

At the July 2019 Commission meeting, the Commission approved draft rules that would modify regulations specific to the commercial food shrimp fishery in inshore waters of Northeast Florida. Staff provided public notice of the proposed rules that would make the Food Shrimp Production license fully transferable (including outside the license-holders' family) and allow shrimping on Mondays that are not legal state holidays and on the Friday after Thanksgiving.

Florida's shrimp fishery is one of the oldest and most valuable commercial fisheries in the state. The Commission's current shrimp regulations are a historical conglomerate of rules with different origins. These regulations are complex, partly because of the unique regionality of the shrimp fishery. This rulemaking is the second phase in a long-term project to streamline and modernize these regulations and addresses industry requests for updates to shrimp rules effecting commercial food shrimp harvest from inland waters of Northeast Florida.

Florida Statutes require a Food Shrimp Production license in addition to other commercial license requirements for commercial harvest of food shrimp from inland waters of Nassau, Duval, St. Johns, Putnam, Flagler, or Clay counties. When the Florida Legislature created the Food Shrimp Production license in 1976, there were approximately 800 fishery participants. The original intent of the Legislature was to phase out the fishery. However, the Legislature authorized transfer of the license to immediate family members in 1988, allowing for the continued operation of this fishery. There are 41 remaining licenses.

Commercial food shrimping in inland waters of Northeast Florida is allowed during daylight hours on Tuesday through Friday, except for legal state holidays. Based on the reduced participation in this fishery, staff believes that allowing a limited number of additional harvest days in this fishery is sustainable. Allowing harvest on Mondays that are not state holidays would not only allow additional access but would provide flexibility for the harvesters if conditions are not favorable to fish other days of the week. Additionally, when the Statute that prohibits this fishery from operating on legal state holidays was implemented, the Friday after Thanksgiving was not a state holiday. When the Friday after Thanksgiving became a state holiday in the 1990s, the fishery lost a day of allowable harvest.

Staff recommend approval of the rules as advertised.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Approval of the proposed final rules to be effective November 15, 2019.

**Staff Contact and/or Presenter:**

Melissa Recks, Division of Marine Fisheries Management