

BRIAN KEMP
GOVERNOR

MARK WILLIAMS
COMMISSIONER

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

BY THE COMMISSIONER

WHEREAS: O.C.G.A. Section 27-4-133(f) authorizes the Commissioner of Natural Resources to authorize persons to take whelks with power-drawn nets of minimum four-inch stretched mesh, from the waters outside, on the seaward side of the sounds, at any time during the year when he has determined that such action is in accordance with the current sound principles of wildlife research and management, and the taking of whelks in such waters will not be detrimental to the conservation of crabs, whelk, and shrimp; and

WHEREAS: the Commissioner has determined that it is consistent with current, sound wildlife research and management principles to authorize at this time whelk trawling in the outside waters, and that to do so will not be detrimental to the conservation of crabs, whelk and shrimp; and

WHEREAS: based on the foregoing, the State of Georgia desires to authorize trawling for whelks with power-drawn nets of minimum four-inch stretched mesh webbing, in the waters outside, on the seaward side, of the sounds from the Georgia-Florida state line boundary northward to the Georgia-South Carolina state line boundary in the vicinity of the Savannah River navigational channel, while affording maximum protection to endangered and threatened sea turtles; and

WHEREAS: based on the foregoing, the State of Georgia desires to keep closed to trawling whelks with power-drawn nets of minimum four-inch stretched mesh the area known as Estelle Beach.

NOW, THEREFORE, BY VIRTUE OF THE POWER VESTED IN ME AS THE COMMISSIONER OF NATURAL RESOURCES, IT IS HEREBY

ORDERED: Effective 7:00 a.m. January 16, 2020 until 8:15 p.m. March 31, 2020:

1

Persons possessing a valid commercial fishing license with a whelk endorsement are authorized to take whelk by trawling with power-drawn nets of minimum four-inch stretched mesh webbing in all waters outside, on the seaward side, of the sounds except as provided below, from the Georgia-Florida state line boundary northward to the Georgia-South Carolina state line boundary in the vicinity of the "Savannah River" navigational channel to the three mile limit, as shown on the chart of the Savannah

River and Wassaw Sound, Soundings in feet, Chart No. 11512, published by the United States Department of Commerce, NOAA, National Ocean Service.

2

Such persons are also authorized to take whelk from the portion of the "Savannah River" navigational channel between the north and south jetties and eastward of the buoy, R "24", Fl R 4 sec., at the inner end of the jetties, southeast of Oyster Bed Island by trawling with power-drawn nets of minimum four-inch stretched mesh webbing.

3

The area known as Estelle Beach, which is south of a line extending along the south jetty of the Savannah River Entrance, thence from the lighted day beacon at the easternmost tip of the south jetty and west of a line extending from said lighted day beacon south to the northernmost tip of Tybee Island, is CLOSED to trawling with power-drawn nets.

4

Trawls with a headrope length greater than 30 feet must be equipped with an approved version of a North Carolina Model Flounder TED with the opening modified to eject leatherback sea turtles or one of two modified versions of this same device approved by the Department of Natural Resources as depicted on the attached diagram. Trawls with a single net having a headrope length of 30 feet or less are not required to have a TED.

5

Operators of whelk trawling vessels shall report the capture of any endangered or threatened species of fish, reptiles, or mammals during such trawling operations and will release such species as soon as practical; provided, however, the vessel crew must attempt to resuscitate comatose sea turtles according to the procedures in 50 C.F.R. 223.206(d)(1).

6

Operators of whelk trawling vessels shall comply with the records keeping and reporting requirements of O.C.G.A. § 27-4-118.

7

Operators of whelk trawling vessels shall allow Department personnel to accompany the vessel crew during normal trawling activities upon the request of the Department in order to allow the collection of scientific measurements and record information gathered from whelks and other organisms captured during trawling operations.

A limit of no more than two (2) bushels of blue crab may be retained at any time on the vessel, regardless of the number of crew onboard. All retained blue crabs must be of legal size and sponge crabs may not be kept. Operators of whelk trawling vessels must also maintain and report records of harvested crabs.

This 30th day of December, 2019.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mark Williams", written over a horizontal line.

Mark Williams

COMMISSIONER OF NATURAL RESOURCES