

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

BY THE COMMISSIONER

- WHEREAS:** O.C.G.A. Section 27-4-195 authorizes the Commissioner of Natural Resources to open or close for the purpose of taking shellfish any or a portion of the salt waters of this state at any time between January 1 and December 31, provided that he has determined that such action in opening or closing said waters is in accordance with the current, sound principles of wildlife research and management; and
- WHEREAS:** O.C.G.A. Section 27-4-197(a) mandates that the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Agriculture conduct a shellfish program sufficient to be certified by the United States Food and Drug Administration for interstate shipment of shellfish produced in Georgia; and
- WHEREAS:** The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference is requiring state shellfish programs to implement a *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* (Vp) control plan should conditions in Georgia so warrant; and
- WHEREAS:** Based on average monthly water temperature calculations, the months of June to September exceed the 81- degree Fahrenheit critical temperature mark, requiring the development and implementation of a Vp control plan for Georgia's oyster harvest; and
- WHEREAS:** The FDA Vp control plan guidance document provides for implementing a closure for the harvest of oysters as an option for addressing Vp management; and
- WHEREAS:** Based on conclusions from the oyster condition index study which scientifically substantiates that during the summer months the commercial quality of intertidal oyster meats in Georgia is poor; and
- WHEREAS:** Based on a new vibrio control plan and new rules promulgated in 2025 to establish regulations for harvesting maricultured oysters during the otherwise closed season, eligible master harvesters of subtidal oyster farms may petition the Department of Natural Resources for permission to harvest oysters during the closed season. The authorization to harvest oysters during the closed season will be limited only to maricultured oysters cultivated on subtidal oyster farms that meet rigorous handling and operation requirements; and

- WHEREAS:** There is little recreational harvest of oysters during the period from June through September; and
- WHEREAS:** Beginning in 2008 and through 2024, the Commissioner of Natural Resources closed the salt waters of this State to the commercial and recreational harvest of oysters for human consumption from June through September of every year to address Vp management requirements; and
- WHEREAS:** Based on the reported annual commercial harvest of oysters over the ten years immediately preceding the 2008 closure of the salt waters of this State to the commercial and recreational harvest of oysters for human consumption from June through September, less than two percent of the total pounds of oysters landed were harvested between the months of June through September; and
- WHEREAS:** Members of the Georgia commercial shellfish fishery agreed with an annual closure of oyster harvest between the months of June through September as a measure in good faith to adequately address the annual Vp management requirements for oyster harvest within the state; and
- WHEREAS:** The Commissioner has determined that closing the salt waters of this State to the commercial and recreational harvest of oysters for human consumption from June 1, 2025, through September 30, 2025, would be consistent with current sound principles of wildlife management.

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

- ORDERED:** That the salt waters of the State of Georgia shall be closed to the commercial and recreational harvest of oysters from 6:00 a.m., Sunday, June 1, 2025, through midnight on Tuesday, September 30, 2025.

IT IS FURTHER

- ORDERED:** Because it is illegal to harvest shellfish at night, the recreational and commercial harvest of oysters shall be allowed beginning at 7:00 a.m. on Wednesday, October 1, 2025.

This 20th day of May 2025.



WALTER RABON
COMMISSIONER OF NATURAL RESOURCES