Alligator season opens in Louisiana

A statewide alligator hunting season, opening Sept. 4 and extending through Oct. 3, was established by the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission at its regular public meeting in New Orleans July 27.

Jesse J. Guidry, secretary of wildlife and fisheries, said alligator hunting will be permitted only in certain areas, with the consent of landowners, parish officials, or the department, according to specific harvest methods and following strict regulations which must track provisions of the Endangered Species Act.

The 30-day season will be closely regulated by rules and procedures adopted by the commission at the meeting. All alligator harvesting as well as the selling of hides, meat and parts will be closely monitored by the department and enforcement will be strict, said Guidry.

Under regulations adopted, a quota was established for each area eligible for hunting. During the 1981 season, some 14,600 alligators were taken with an estimated value of almost $2 million.

It is anticipated that approximately 18,000 tags will be issued by the department for the upcoming season.

These tags must be attached to the hides immediately and remain intact during skinning, storage, shipment and processing. All hunters must be authorized by landowners or proper parish authorities, or the department, and must be properly licensed. Cost of a resident alligator hunting license is $25 and a non-resident sport hunting license is $150.

Indiscriminate hunting of alligators anywhere in Louisiana or in designated non-hunting areas is a violation of state and federal laws.

Guidry said that participants in last year's hunting have already been mailed packets of information, including rules and regulations as well as application forms, along with other pertinent information necessary for participation in this year's season.

He said other interested persons can obtain similar information at any of the department's district offices in Monroe, Minden, Ferriday, Alexandria, Opelousas, Lake Charles, Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

General provisions for the approaching season are similar to those last year. No alligators under four feet in length can be taken. Hunting is allowed only in daylight hours between one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

Guidry stressed there would be no indiscriminate hunting of alligators and this season was different from other hunting seasons in that sport hunting was strictly controlled.

He said the 'gator hunting program would be restricted to three types of hunting: by landowners of privately owned alligator habitat or their designated representatives, on department-selected lakes containing alligator habitat, and the removal of nuisance alligators.

Hunting on pre-selected Louisiana lakes where alligator habitat exists would be controlled by tag allotment.

In those cases, parish authorities may be requested to submit the names of designated hunters for review by the department prior to the issuance of tags.

Persons having alligator habitat and alligator populations on private property, as well as hunters interested in taking alligators from selected lakes in central and north Louisiana should contact the district office for full information.