Local residents will have several more weeks to examine the $4 million environmental mitigation settlement proposed between the state Department of Natural Resources and Honeywell International.

DNR announced Monday that Commissioner Mark Williams extended the public comment period by 30 days, placing the deadline on Feb. 18. Attorneys for DNR lodged the proposed consent decree with the federal district court in Atlanta on Dec. 19.

A number of interested parties — including state Rep. Jeff Jones, R-St. Simons Island, who sent a letter to Williams — sought an extension beyond the usual 30 days because, among other reasons, the proposed deal came at the height of the holiday season, when the general public has significant time responsibilities to friends and family compared to other times of the year.

There is a public meeting scheduled from 7-9 p.m. Tuesday at the Brunswick-Glynn County Library on Gloucester Street in which staff from the state and Honeywell will be on hand to answer questions and provide information.
The consent decree and other associated documents are available on The News website and on the DNR Coastal Resources Division site at coastalgadnr.org/settlement-reached-honeywell-compensate-state-georgia-recreational-fishing-losses-due-0.

Public comments on the proposed consent decree are to be sent to Jim Brown, Program Manager, Georgia Environmental Protection Division, 2 Martin Luther King Jr. Dr., Suite 1054, Atlanta, Ga. 30334.

In other fishery regulatory news, state waters are closing to shrimp fishing Jan. 15, but whelk season opens the next day, Jan. 16. The annual shrimp fishery closure is to allow shrimp to reproduce in large enough amounts and grow to large enough size to hopefully provide for a good shrimp harvest in the coming year.

The shrimp fishery tends to reopen in late May or early June, depending on conditions at the time.

According to the CRD, “One of the important indicators to biologists is the number of individual shrimp it takes to make a pound, referred to as ‘count size.’ When shrimp are larger, it takes fewer individuals to make a full pound. One of the benchmarks biologists use when considering closing Georgia’s waters is 50 shrimp or more making a pound. Data collected in December found it took about 38.4 shrimp to make one pound, roughly 2 percent higher than the long-term average since 1976.”

The whelk season is to open at 7 a.m. on Jan. 16 and run through 8:15 p.m. on March 31.

Regulatory requirements for whelk trawls include the use of minimum 4-inch stretch mesh trawl gear and a certified turtle excluder device. Fishers also need a state commercial fishing license with a whelk endorsement.

Whelk fishers are allowed to carry a maximum of two bushels of blue crabs on board, with records kept and reported as to the number of crabs harvested, and retained blue crabs must be of legal size.
LCP Chemicals Complaint and Proposed Consent Decree
Dec 27, 2019

Wes Wolfe