

## What's in a Name?

When you hear the word dolphin, do you think of the gray marine mammal or the metallic blue-green fish? The dolphinfish, *Coryphaena hippurus*, causes some confusion between the fish and the marine mammal. Also known as Mahi Mahi and Dorado, the fish is found worldwide in the warm subtropic and tropic waters of the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans, and the Gulf of Mexico at depths up to 279 feet.



Dolphinfish. Photo credit: Diane Rome Peebles

These fish are found in the water column and generally hang out under Sargassum or other floating objects. Young fish school in groups of up to 50 individuals while adults tend to be less social and typically occur alone or in pairs.

Dolphinfish live by the motto “live fast and die young.” Typically fish in the Gulf of Mexico die by age two, and the maximum life expectancy is only five years. These fish offer a rare opportunity for scientist to age the species at a daily rate, as they grow approximately five inches per month. While three to four and a half feet is common size, fish can reach a length of six feet. The largest dolphinfish caught on record was 87 pounds. However, for sportsmen and commercial fisherman, the average weight is 20 to 30 pounds.

Dolphinfish are easily recognizable by their metallic blue-green top and yellowish-white underbelly. Once these fish are removed from the water the color quickly fades to dull silver. Another distinguishing feature of the fish is the large blue dorsal fin, which runs almost the entire length of the back.

True to the “live fast and die young” motto, dolphinfish are sexually mature at four to five months and spawn for the first time at eight inches. Fish spawn multiple times per year; in waters where temperatures stay above 90 °F they spawn year round. In the Gulf, dolphinfish spawn in higher salinity offshore warm, summer waters. Large females, 43 inches and larger, are capable of producing up to one million eggs per spawn while smaller females typically produce up to 250,000 eggs per event. Mortality rates of larval and juvenile fish are high as they are an excellent meal for other fish and seabirds.

Males and females are easy to tell apart. Males are larger and heavier than females with a blunt, vertical head. The difference in head shape is apparent around six months of age.

The long, tapered, and slender bodies make the fish an excellent swimmer able to chase and catch prey. Feeding behavior of dolphinfish causes a close association with items floating at the water's surface, which serve as a hunting ground. Sight is very important in the hunting strategy of dolphinfish causing them to feed primarily during daylight hours. These visual predators consume many different types of fish and crustaceans. Some common prey items include flying fish, man-o-war, triggerfish, puffer fish, crabs and grunts. The most common meal choice in the Gulf of Mexico is the triggerfish, followed by shrimp and squid, jacks and flying fish. The diet of the fish changes with age. Small fish primarily feed on upon crustaceans, especially copepods, while larger fish feed mostly on boney fish. Studies have shown that flying fish make up 25 percent of an adult dolphinfish diet. These agile and fast swimming fish have many choices when deciding what is for dinner.

Dolphinfish are highly prized by recreational anglers and commercial fishermen because of the quality of the meat. The fish is one of the most popular sport fish in the world.

In the Gulf of Mexico, dolphinfish landings have varied widely from 1,177,325 pounds with a value of \$1,576,576 in 1995 to 497,360 pounds with a value of \$715,572.00 in 2009. In Louisiana, landings have declined from 560,490 pounds with a value of \$471,363 in 1991 to 71,900 pounds with a value of \$61,523 in 2009. Generally, females are landed more than males in the commercial fishery since females tend to have a closer association with floating objects and are easier to locate and catch. Dolphinfish are not only fun to catch but tasty to eat!

- **A. Nikki Anderson**

## **Cameron Direct Seafood**

The Cameron Direct Seafood website is live on the Internet at [www.camerondirectseafood.com](http://www.camerondirectseafood.com).

The Cameron site is part of the larger Louisiana Direct Seafood website, one of four locations across the state where consumers can find and contact local fishermen and dealers to purchase seafood. The website benefits both producers and consumers in that the producer receives a little better price for high quality, fresh seafood, while consumers get a good deal on locally produced, fresh seafood.

The project is modeled after the highly successful Delcambre Direct Seafood project that began three years ago. Fishermen participating in the Delcambre project get more for their catch and typically have their harvest sold before the boat returns to dock from a trip.

The majority of the seafood sold on the website will be shrimp since shrimp is the number one seafood product consumed in the U.S., but other products may be available as the market develops.

The spring inshore shrimp season for western Louisiana is just getting underway (opened May 21) and typically lasts six to eight weeks. Shrimp and other seafood will be available throughout the summer months and into the fall, even during inshore closures when many fishermen harvest from nearshore Gulf waters and open areas of the ship channel.

Nearly 90 percent of shrimp consumed in the U.S. are imports, primarily from the South China Sea region and South America. These are farm-raised shrimp that come to the U.S. in frozen packages to fill the display cases of our supermarkets.

The demand for shrimp in the U.S. has created a need for imports. However, if you prefer to eat locally produced fresh or frozen shrimp and other seafood products straight from the boats, contact one of the captains on the Cameron Direct sellers' page. While on the website, you also can sign up for the newsletter which will go out periodically, notifying consumers of upcoming seasons, openings and when the boats are catching. Click on the fresh catch button to see the latest landings and what the local fishermen have to offer.

- Kevin Savoie

### Report Asian Tiger Prawn Catches

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) is aware of and constantly monitoring the appearance of an increased number of Asian tiger prawns, a non-native species, in Louisiana waters. LDWF officials are asking local shrimp harvesters to report catches of tiger prawns to the department.

While there is little known at this time about the impacts of tiger prawns on indigenous Louisiana shrimp, these reports are key in helping LDWF biologists monitor the distribution and relative abundance of these prawns and in determining the possible presence of spawning populations.

To report catches of Asian tiger prawns please contact Robert Bourgeois at [rbourgeois@wlf.la.gov](mailto:rbourgeois@wlf.la.gov) or 225/765-0765 or Marty Bourgeois at [mbourgeois@wlf.la.gov](mailto:mbourgeois@wlf.la.gov) or 225/765-2401 with the date, location and size of capture. Pictures are encouraged. Tiger prawns are easily identifiable by their large size, dark body color and white banding found along the head and between segments of the tail. LDWF officials ask that harvesters retain the tiger prawns by freezing and contact the biologists listed above.

*History of incidence in Gulf of Mexico:* It is unknown when and how tiger prawns were first introduced into the Gulf of Mexico. In 1988, a portion of a population of reared tiger prawns escaped from a facility on the east coast. Approximately 1,000 adults were later recaptured as far south as Cape Canaveral, Fla. In September 2006, a single adult male was captured by a commercial shrimp fisherman in Mississippi Sound near Dauphin Island, Ala., and reports from Alabama and Mississippi have been increasing ever since.

LDWF first documented the occurrence of Asian tiger prawns in Louisiana in August 2007, when a single specimen was taken by a commercial shrimp fisherman in Vermilion Bay. Prior to the 2011 fall inshore shrimp season, reported captures in Louisiana waters numbered fewer than 25 with none taken any farther westward than Vermilion Bay. However, since the fall season began,

## Lagniappe Fisheries Newsletter

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reported captures have dramatically increased with approximately 80 new reports received. One fisherman alone reported catching as many as 13 individuals over a three-day shrimping trip in Lake Pontchartrain. A Dulac shrimp dock has reported fishermen capturing in excess of 100 tiger prawns following the 2011 fall season opening. Most recently, there have also been incident reports west of Vermilion Bay.

*About the species:* Asian tiger prawns are native to the Indo-Pacific rim and are both harvested in the wild and extensively farmed in a number of countries.

Tiger prawns belong to the same family (Penaeidae) as our native brown, white and pink shrimp but are non-indigenous to our waters. The life history of tiger prawns is also similar to that of brown and white shrimp with spawning and mating occurring in nearshore oceanic waters. One notable difference in tiger prawns and Louisiana shrimp is size as the research suggests tiger prawns may reach a maximum length of 14 inches and weigh as much as 23 ounces.

At this time, there is no evidence that tiger prawns feed on native Louisiana shrimp. Any potential impacts over competition for food and resources remain unknown. Tiger prawns, as well as our native brown and white shrimp, adopt different diets as they grow and mature and may become more predatory as body size increases.

### **Biloxi W.M.A. Lease Renewed for Additional 25 Years**

Outdoors enthusiasts utilizing the Biloxi Wildlife Management Area (WMA) will continue to have access to the site for an additional 25 years following renewal of a lease between the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) and Biloxi Marsh Lands Corp.

“This long standing partnership with Biloxi Marsh Lands Corp. has provided for public access to this excellent fish and wildlife habitat for 55 years, and we are pleased that arrangements have been made to extend that access at no cost to the department,” said LDWF Secretary Robert Barham.

The Biloxi WMA is located in upper St. Bernard Parish, approximately 40 miles east of New Orleans. It is accessible only by boat via commercial launches at Hopedale and Shell Beach. The 35,644-acre tract has been leased to LDWF by the corporation since 1957.

“Biloxi Marsh Lands Corp. is very proud of the fact that it has been able to provide more than 35,000 acres of its property for public recreation for more than 50 years, and with the recent renewal of the lease agreement we will continue to provide an expansive area for public use for the next 25 years,” said William Rudolf, Biloxi Marsh Lands Corp. president.

A number of bayous, sloughs and potholes make the Biloxi tract an excellent producer of fish, shrimp, crabs, waterfowl and furbearers. The few canal spoil banks and ridges scattered throughout the marsh provide escape for birds and mammals from rising water levels during storms or high tides.

Game species hunted on the area include rabbits, rails, gallinules, snipe, ducks and geese. Ducks present in winter months include lesser scaup, teal, widgeon, gadwall, shoveler and mottled duck, with lesser concentrations of pintail and mallard. Blue and snow geese are normally found on the WMA, although not in large numbers. Furbearing animals present include nutria, muskrat, mink, raccoon, otter and opossum. Alligators are also found on the property.

Fish species common in the area include speckled trout, redfish, black drum, sheepshead, flounder and croaker.

## **LOUISIANA REGULATIONS**

### **Moving Forward with “State-waters Only” Red Snapper Season**

The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission (LWFC) took action to implement a “Louisiana-only” red snapper recreational season, set to begin in 2013. This Louisiana red snapper weekend-only season would begin the Saturday preceding Palm Sunday each year and end September 30 of the same year, with a recreational bag limit of three fish per day at a 16 inch minimum. A weekend is defined as Friday, Saturday and Sunday, with the exception of Memorial Day and Labor Day, when Monday would be classified as a weekend as well.

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) Secretary Robert Barham was given the authority to modify the portions of this rule pertaining to red snapper recreational daily harvest limits and seasons if the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Survey institutes sub-regional management for the species or if it is otherwise deemed necessary.

In related action, next month LWFC will also consider extending state waters from three miles offshore to three nautical miles or approximately 10.357 miles. This action is being considered based on recent legislative action taken in 2011 in Act 336, which recognizes that the Gulf-ward boundary historically consists of three marine leagues and designates that boundary to be enforced by state law regarding the protection and restoration of coastal lands, waters and natural resources and regulation of activities affecting them.

## **GULF OF MEXICO REGULATIONS**

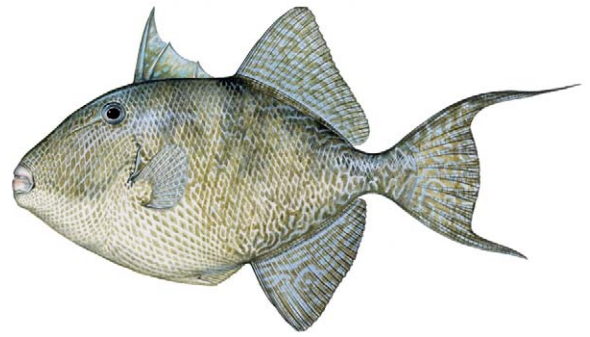
### **Gulf of Mexico Gray Triggerfish**

NOAA Fisheries Service announces new regulations to control the harvest of gray triggerfish in the Gulf of Mexico. The temporary rule reduces the catch limits and sets commercial and recreational annual catch targets (quotas). It was published in the *Federal Register* May 14, 2012, and is effective immediately. This rule will be effective for 180-days. NOAA Fisheries Service may extend the rule, but needs to allow the public to comment on the rule before an extension can take place.

Gulf of Mexico gray triggerfish are overfished (the population is too low) and undergoing overfishing (too many are being caught each year). The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (council) asked NOAA Fisheries Service to put in place temporary regulations to reduce gray triggerfish overfishing while they work on long-term measures to end overfishing and let the population increase in size.

To reduce overfishing, NOAA Fisheries Service’s temporary rule reduces the recreational and commercial annual catch limits by approximately 50 percent to 241,200 and 64,100 pounds whole weight, respectively. The rule also sets annual catch targets (quotas) at 217,100 and 60,900 pounds whole weight, respectively.

NOAA Fisheries Service needs to make sure gray triggerfish quotas are not exceeded within the year. There is already a quota closure for the commercial sector, so no additional measures are needed. However, there is no in-season closure for the recreational sector. This temporary rule includes a provision to close the recreational sector if it catches its quota.



Gray Triggerfish. Photo credit: Diane Rome Peebles

Other gray triggerfish regulations are unchanged. This includes the commercial and recreational minimum size limit of 14-inches fork length and inclusion of gray triggerfish in the recreational 20-reef fish aggregate bag limit.

For more information, a Frequently Asked Questions document can be found at <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/GrouperSnapperandReefFish.htm>.

*Commenting on the temporary rule:*

The temporary rule is effective for 180 days after it publishes. It can be extended for another 186 days provided the public has a chance to comment on the rule. It is unlikely the council and NOAA Fisheries Service will be able to complete and implement long-term measures within the 180-day period. Therefore, NOAA Fisheries Service invites the public to comment on the rule, and whether it should be extended. This will help the agency determine if a rule extension is needed or some other type of action is required. The comment period on the rule ends on June 13, 2012.

**Proposed Rule to Require Turtle Excluder Device Use for Skimmer Trawls, Pusher-Head Trawls and Wing Nets (Butterfly Trawls)**

NOAA Fisheries Service is seeking comments on a proposed rule to strengthen sea turtle conservation efforts. The rule, if implemented, would require all skimmer trawls, pusher-head trawls and wing nets (butterfly trawls) to use turtle excluder devices in their nets. The purpose of the proposed rule is to aid in the protection and recovery of listed sea turtle populations by reducing incidental bycatch and mortality of sea turtles in the southeastern U.S. shrimp fisheries.

NOAA Fisheries Service also prepared a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS), which includes a description of the purpose and need for evaluating the proposed action and other potential management alternatives, the scientific methodology and data used in the analyses, background information on the physical, biological, human, and administrative environments, and a description of the effects of the proposed action and other potential management alternatives on the aforementioned environments.

For more information on the proposed rule and the documents outlining the analysis, a list of frequently asked questions regarding the newly proposed requirements in the southeastern shrimp fisheries can be found on the NOAA Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office's website at <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pr.htm>.

*Request for Comments:*

The proposed rule was published in the *Federal Register* on May 10, 2012. A notice of availability on the DEIS was published in the *Federal Register* on May 18, 2012. Written comments on the proposed rule and DEIS must be received no later than July 9 and July 2, 2012, respectively, to be considered by NOAA Fisheries Service. All comments received by NOAA Fisheries Service will be addressed in the final rule and final environmental impact statement.

Electronic copies of the proposed rule or the DEIS may be obtained from the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov> and the NOAA Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office's website at <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pr.htm>.

*Public Hearings:*

NOAA Fisheries Service has scheduled five public hearings in May and June 2012 to solicit public comment on the proposed rule. The dates, times, and locations of the hearings are as follows:

Larose, La. – June 4, 2012, 4pm-6pm, Larose  
Regional Park and Civic Center, 307 East 5th Street,  
Larose, LA 70373.

Belle Chasse, La. – June 5, 2012, 4pm-6pm,  
Belle Chasse Community Center, 8398 Highway 23,  
Belle Chasse, LA 70037.

D'Iberville, Miss. – June 6, 2012, 4pm-6pm,  
L.H. "Red" Barnett Senior Center, 10450 Lamey  
Bridge Road, D'Iberville, MS 39540.

Bayou La Batre, Ala. – June 13, 2012, 2pm-4pm,  
Bayou La Batre Community Center, 12745  
Padgett Switch Road, Bayou La Batre, AL 36509.

How to Submit Comments: You may submit comments by either of the following methods. Comments received through other means may not be considered.

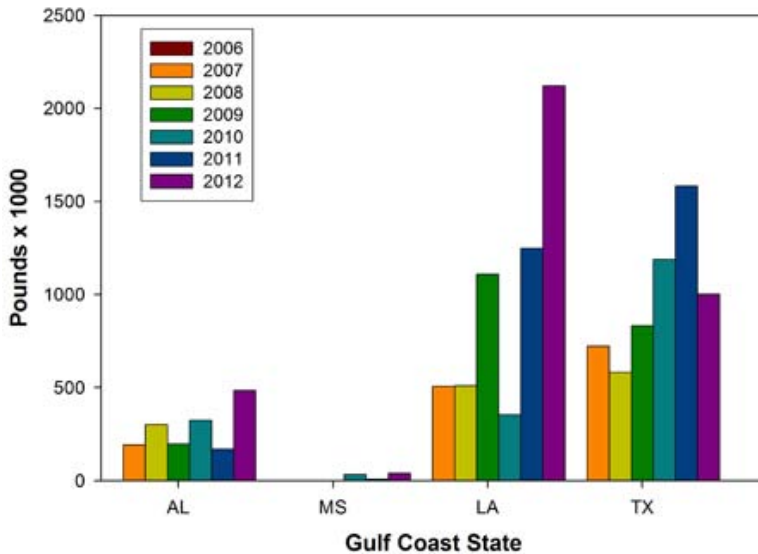
*Electronic Submissions:* Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>

Mail: Michael C. Barnette, NOAA Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, Protected Resources Division, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701-5505.

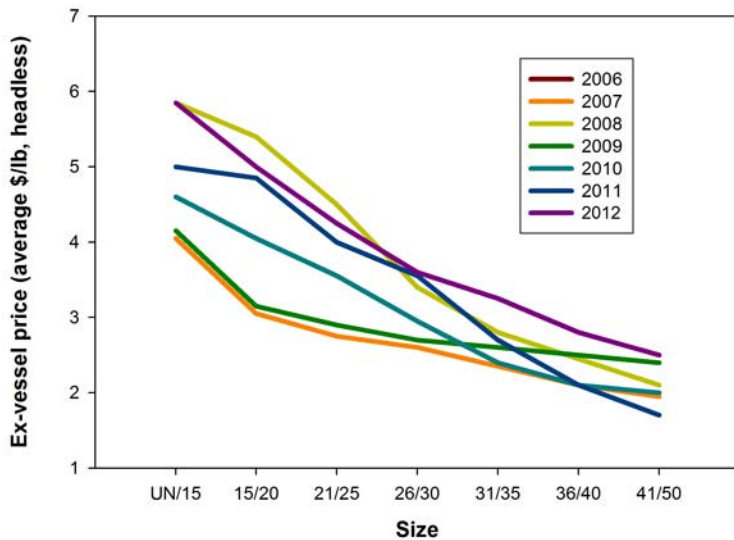
## Louisiana Shrimp Watch

Louisiana specific data portrayed in the graphics are selected from preliminary data posted by NOAA on their website. All data portrayed are subject to final revision and approval by NOAA. Shrimp landings are ex-vessel prices, inclusive of all species harvested. Missing, inadequate or withheld reports are portrayed as "zero" in these graphics. Price graphics reflect central Gulf states only (Texas and Florida are reported independently). For more information, please refer to: [www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/market\\_news/index.html](http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st1/market_news/index.html).

April Shrimp Harvest

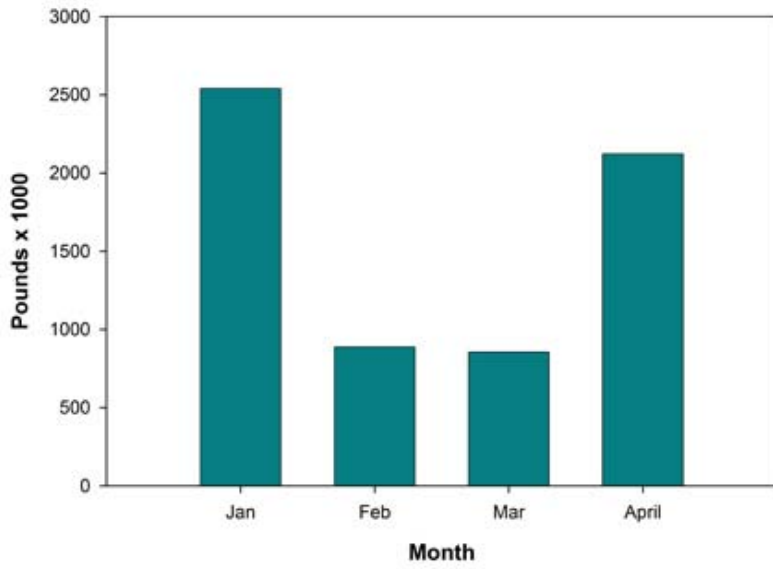


April Northern GoM Shrimp Prices

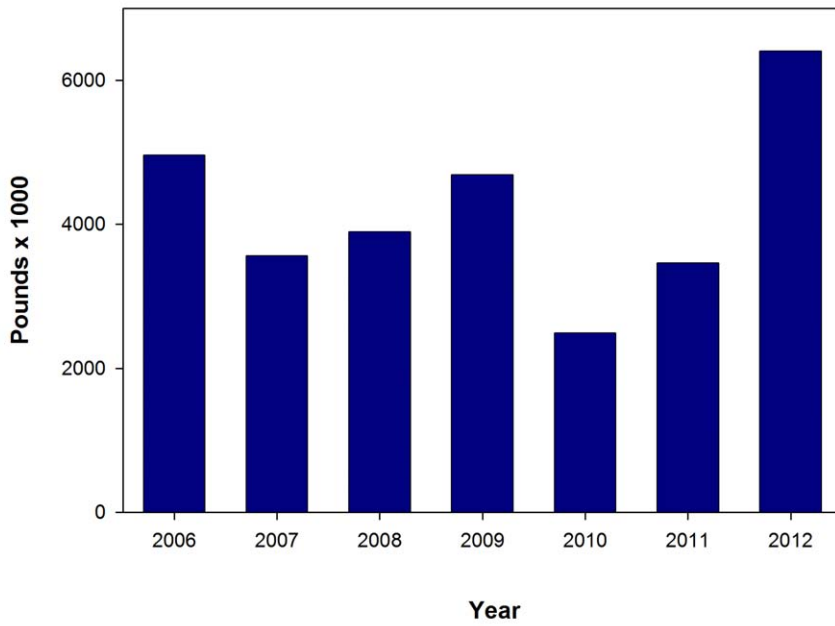




Louisiana 2012 Shrimp Harvest



Louisiana Year to Date Shrimp Harvest



## Fish Gear Coordinates

In accordance with the provisions of R.S. 56:700.1 et. seq., notice is given that four claims in the amount of \$20,000 were received for payment during the period April 1, 2012 - April 30, 2012. There were four claims paid and zero claims denied.

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates of reported underwater obstructions are:

2913.178	8959.467	JEFFERSON
2914.671	9039.656	TERREBONNE
2917.687	8954.202	PLAQUEMINES
2932.241	9003.833	JEFFERSON

A list of claimants and amounts paid can be obtained from Gwendolyn Thomas, administrator, Fishermen's Gear Compensation Fund, P.O. Box 44277, Baton Rouge, LA 70804 or you can call 225/342-9388.

## The Gumbo Pot

If you have a favorite seafood recipe that you would like to share, please send it to Julie Anderson [janderson@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:janderson@agcenter.lsu.edu) for inclusion in future issues.



For more information, contact your local extension agent:



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We would like to hear from you! Please contact us regarding fishery questions, comments or concerns you would like to see covered in the Lagniappe. Anyone interested in submitting information, such as articles, editorials or photographs pertaining to fishing or fisheries management is encouraged to do so.

**Please contact Lagniappe editor Julie Anderson at [janderson@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:janderson@agcenter.lsu.edu).**

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