

# Lagniappe

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## Don't Worry, Be Crabby: Current Trends in the Crab Industry

Crawfish season cannot last forever, and shrimp season is not yet in full swing. Luckily, we have another tasty crustacean available- blue crabs. While blue crabs are caught year round in Louisiana, the peak season is in the warm summer months of June, July and August. Soft shell blue crabs follow this trend as crabs molt more (hence more soft shells) in warmer months.

In Louisiana, blue crabs reach adult size in about 12-18 months. However, many factors affect their growth. Salinity and temperature are very important.

Baby crabs that just hatched need salty water, which is why the females migrate out to the saltier areas of the state to hatch their eggs. A female can have 8 to 9 million eggs at a time, and they can produce eggs several times after mating once. However once they are juveniles, blue crabs can survive in completely fresh water — although they still prefer some salt. To grow, the crabs must molt. A male will molt about 25 times in his life while females molt about 20 times. Food availability and the amount of predators will also affect growth and blue crab populations.

Blue crab populations have been a popular topic across Louisiana, the Gulf of Mexico and the East Coast over the last few years. Overall, all regions have seen a decline in landings. In years without a major interruption to fishing (i.e. hurricanes), Louisiana usually lands close to 50 million pounds of blue crab. Landings were below 40 million pounds in 2013. The preliminary numbers for 2014 put landings near 42 million pounds for 2014. Louisiana is usually the number one producer of blue crab in the country, and a lot of our blue crab is shipped to the Chesapeake Bay region. While our landings are down some, states like Virginia are down by more than 50 percent since 2010.

Like most things, supply and demand plays a major role in the price of crab. For years, the price was relatively stable (dockside) for crabs. However, with many states in decline and demand still up, the dockside price has been climbing. In 2013, Louisiana landings had a record high dockside value



Photo Credit: Paula Ouder

of \$51 million. Preliminary numbers from 2014 look like we will set a new state record high with a dockside value of \$62 million for blue crabs. That does not include peeler crabs or soft shells.

Many factors could be causing this decline, from rainfall patterns, to predator and prey abundance, to fishing pressure. Many of these factors cannot be directly managed easily. However, because of the supply concern, all states with blue crab have been looking at commercial fishing management options to make sure we keep populations up.

In Louisiana, a new blue crab fishery management plan is out that summarizes all the historic landings and regulations. Recent regulations to make sure our blue crab fishermen stay economically viable have been the implementation of larger escape rings being phased in by 2017 (3 rings at 2 3/8<sup>th</sup> inches) and the training program for new fishermen ([www.wlf.louisiana.gov/crabtraining](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/crabtraining)). The state is also looking at ways to keep track of the number of traps in the water as currently there is no way to measure this in Louisiana.

Knowing the number of traps would make it easier to manage the fishery and know if fishing effort is increasing or decreasing. Currently, the state can only measure the number of trips fishermen make but not traps. Keeping our populations healthy is important so that as crawfish season ends, we can switch our boiling pots to crabs.

- **Julie Lively**

### **Louisiana Sea Grant Seeks Public Comment for Program Review**

The Louisiana Sea Grant College Program (LSG) will have its scheduled four-year review on June 16 -17, 2015, in the Energy, Coast & Environment Building on the LSU Baton Rouge campus.

A federal Site Review Team convened by the Director of the National Sea Grant College Program will review and discuss LSG management and organization, stakeholder engagement and collaborative network/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) activities.

People who would like to offer comments to the review team on these aspects of the program are invited to submit written statements no later than Friday, June 12, 2015. Comments should be e-mailed to the National Sea Grant College Program at [oar.sg.feedback@noaa.gov](mailto:oar.sg.feedback@noaa.gov).

Following the site visit, the review team will produce a report to the National Sea Grant College Program and LSG. The review is part of a larger effort by the National Sea Grant College Program to foster increased cooperation among the 33 Sea Grant Programs nationwide and to understand how local and regional programs and priorities relate to NOAA national needs and priorities.

Louisiana Sea Grant is an ocean and coastal research, extension, outreach and education program. Its administrative office is located at Louisiana State University's Baton Rouge campus, and it has extension, outreach and education offices in parishes throughout the Louisiana Coastal Zone. Louisiana Sea Grant is funded by NOAA, Louisiana State University, Louisiana coastal parishes, a variety of local, state and federal competitive grants and by private endowments. LSG personnel provide training, education, expert advice and assistance on healthy ecosystems and habitats,

resilient communities and economies, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, and education and workforce development. Sea Grant-funded scientists conduct research to help find solutions to these types of coastal issues.

### Another Monster in the Deep

Giant squid, Megamouth Shark, and Giant Spider Crabs. What do these creatures all have in common? They are all very large marine organisms that are rarely seen alive!

The Oarfish (*Regalecus glesne*) is another member of this elusive cast of characters that has gained recent attention due to a fairly high number of them washing up on beaches in the Gulf of Mexico and southern California in the last few years.

Resembling eels or oars in their long shape, these fish are thought to be the longest bony fish still in existence and can reach lengths of over 50 feet. Aside from their elongated body plans, these fish are distinguished by a long dorsal fin that runs the entire length of their body with a distinct and elaborate red dorsal fin projecting from the head – kind of like a mohawk. Another uncanny thing about this fish is its method of locomotion; most long fish use their body or tail to propel themselves through the water. The oarfish, however, undulates its long dorsal fin for movement, and they typically orient themselves vertically in the water column.

Another interesting and counterintuitive fact about these creatures is that despite their large size, they lack teeth and are primarily planktivores, meaning they strain microscopic organisms such as larval fish and crustaceans out of the water column. They are thought to be preyed upon by any type of large, carnivorous deep-dwelling organism. These fish are thought to have almost a global distribution and, despite their obscurity, are abundant enough that they are not considered endangered or threatened.

The reason so little is known about these giant fish is because they live in the deep ocean as adults, typically at depths between 600 and 3,000 feet. Unfortunately, adults are typically only found washed up on beaches, often not fully intact as they typically encounter predation, parasites, storms or other



Photo Credit: gazeta.ua

## Lagniappe Fisheries Newsletter

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disturbances as they make their journey up from the abyss. Sailors in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries described these fish as giant sea serpents or sea monsters. In Japanese folklore the appearance of these fish is thought to be foreshadowing for earthquakes – although there may be some truth to that as many deep-sea creatures are thought to be more sensitive to tectonic activity. Juveniles, however, tend to inhabit shallower waters and sightings have been reported by people at sea. Some live video footage has even been recorded in recent years, during deep sea exploration near the *Deepwater Horizon* wellhead. For anyone that is interested in checking out one of these crazy creatures, an eight-foot specimen was donated to the ichthyology collection at the LSU Museum of Natural Sciences in 2011.

- **Jenessa Kay**

### **Inshore Recreational Reef Sites**

A notice of intent to designate and protect 31 inshore fishing reefs as part of the LDWF Artificial Reef Program was adopted in April. Louisiana's Artificial Reef Program includes a robust offshore 'Rigs to Reef' component, the backbone of our reef program. In the last two years the Artificial Reef Council have added inshore and nearshore components to the program that are modeled after the successful 'Rigs to Reef' program. In the first 20 years of the artificial reef program LDWF built 16 inshore reefs, during the last eight years the numbers have almost doubled.

## **LOUISIANA REGULATIONS**

### **Louisiana Offshore Shrimp Season Opens**

The shrimp season in the portion of state outside waters extending a distance of three nautical miles, seaward of the Inside/Outside Shrimp Line, from the northwest shore of Caillou Boca at -90 degrees 50 minutes 27 seconds west longitude westward to the eastern shore of the Atchafalaya River Ship Channel at Eugene Island as delineated by the channel red buoy line, opened to shrimping at 6 a.m. on Wednesday, April 22. This area lies seaward of Terrebonne Parish.

According to the most recent trawl samples taken by LDWF biologists, small white shrimp which previously occupied these waters since December have reached marketable sizes and the closure is no longer necessary. Significant numbers of smaller size white shrimp still remain in State Outside Waters west of the Atchafalaya River Ship Channel to the western shore of Freshwater Bayou Canal at -92 degrees 18 minutes 33 seconds west longitude, and these waters will remain closed to shrimping until further notice.

The opening dates for the 2015 spring inshore shrimp season will be considered by the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission at their May 7 meeting.

## **Repealing the TED Enforcement Prohibition**

In a significant vote at the Louisiana Shrimp Task Force meeting in April, members came together and voted unanimously to support the repeal of legislation that prohibits LDWF agents from enforcing federal Turtle Excluding Devices (TED) regulations.

Their motion was to, “Support legislation to repeal La. R.S. 56:57.2 (both sections) for a period of two years, after which time the Shrimp Task Force shall review the efficacy of the repeal and recommend to the Legislature whether to reinstate the prohibition of enforcement, or to permanently repeal the legislation.”

Existing legislation adopted in 1987 (R.S. 56.57.2), has prevented Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries enforcement agents from enforcing federal TED laws or regulations. The Shrimp Task Force has been working with industry members and attending public meetings over the course of the last year to better understand the industry’s concerns regarding the repeal of this legislation. This outreach has helped them garner support for the motion made today.

## **GULF OF MEXICO REGULATIONS**

### **Commercial and Recreational Red Snapper**

For 2015, the red snapper allowable catch is increasing from 11.0 million pounds (mp) whole weight to 14.3 mp. The commercial and recreational sector quotas will be based on the current 51 percent commercial and 49 percent recreational allocation. The commercial quota will increase to 7.29 mp; the recreational quota will increase to 7.01 mp.

The red snapper commercial sector is managed under an individual fishing quota program. The increase to the commercial quota will be distributed to shareholders on or shortly after the effective date of the final rule.

NOAA Fisheries also established a federally permitted charter vessel/headboat (for-hire) component and a private angling component within the recreational sector, allocated the red snapper recreational quota and annual catch target between the components, and established separate seasonal closure provisions for the two components. The resulting annual catch targets for each component are 2.371 mp for the federally permitted for-hire component, and 3.234 mp for the private angling component (which also includes non-federally permitted for-hire vessels) of the recreational sector.

For 2015, the red snapper recreational season in federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico will be different for the two components of the recreational sector. Both the for-hire and private angling components will open on June 1, 2015, at 12:01 a.m., local time. Closing dates are:

Private Anglers: June 11, 2015, at 12:01 a.m., local time.

Federal For-Hire Vessels: July 15, 2015, at 12:01 a.m., local time.

The federal-water red snapper bag limit is 2 fish with a 16-inch minimum total length size limit.

## Red Grouper

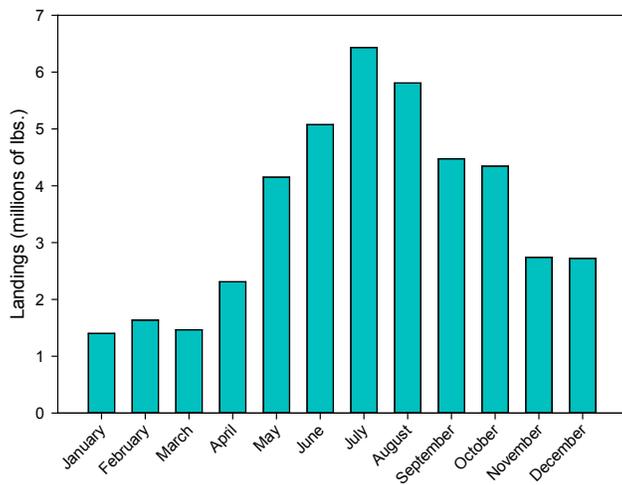
NOAA Fisheries announces two new changes to recreational red grouper fishing:

1. The red grouper bag limit will go from 4 fish to 2 fish effective May 7, 2015, at 12:01 a.m., local time.
2. The accountability measure for a reduction in the bag limit when the annual catch limit is exceeded is removed.

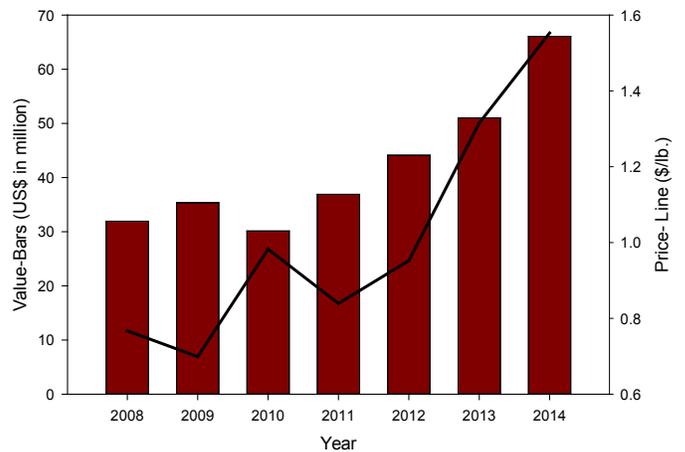
## Louisiana Blue Crab Watch

This is the preliminary 2014 landings data for Louisiana blue crab based on the LDWF trip ticket program. All data portrayed are subject to final revision and approval.

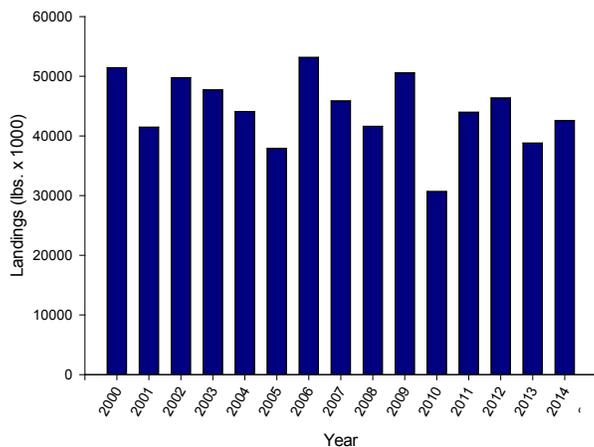
2014 Louisiana Blue Crab Landings



Value of Blue Crab Catch in Louisiana



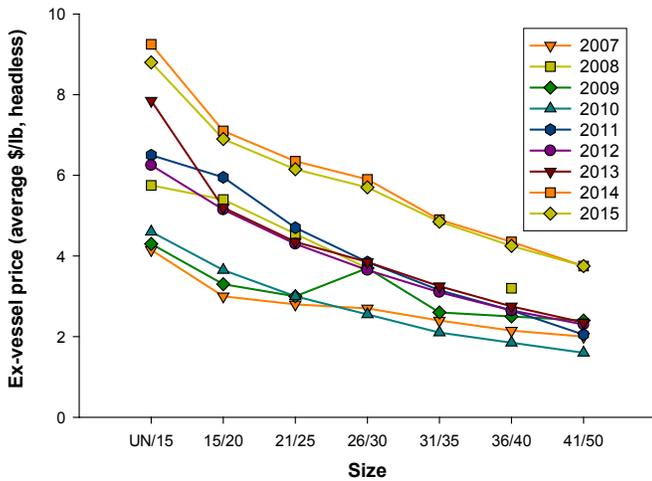
Blue Crab Landings in Louisiana



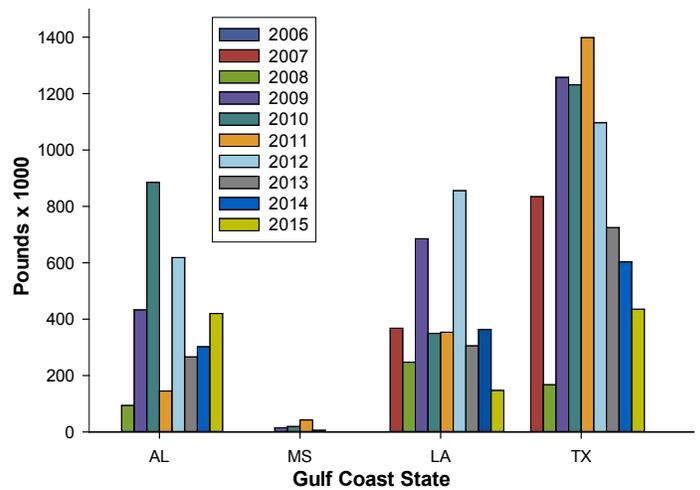
## Louisiana Shrimp Watch

Louisiana specific data portrayed in the graphics are selected from preliminary data posted by NOAA on its 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).

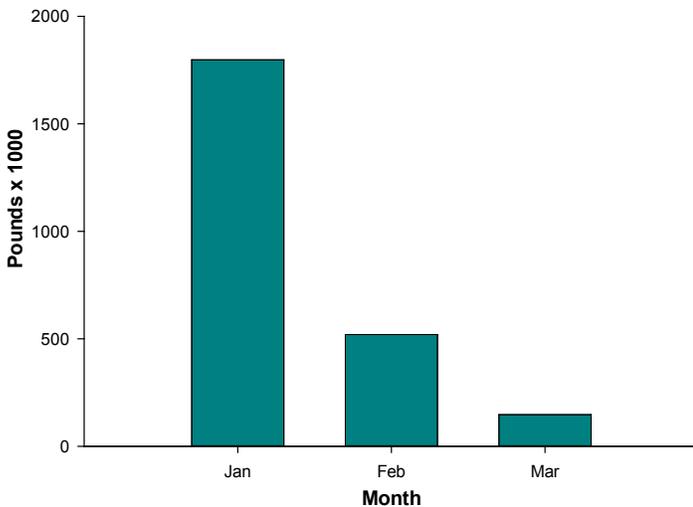
March Northern GoM Shrimp Prices



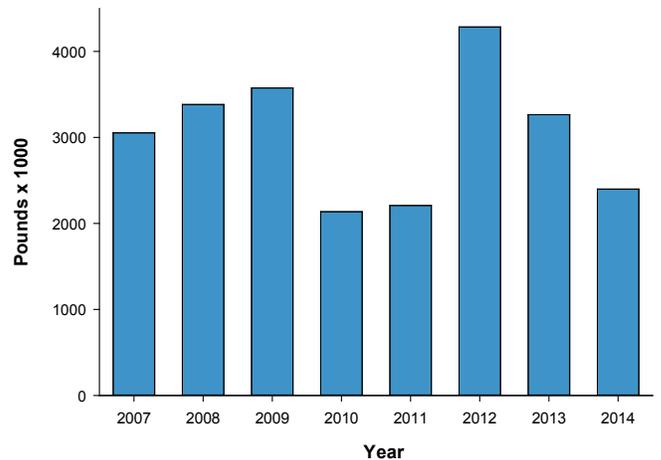
March Shrimp Harvest



Louisiana 2015 Shrimp Harvest



Louisiana Year to Date Shrimp Harvest January- March



## Fish Gear Coordinates

In accordance with the provisions of R.S. 56:700.1 et. seq., notice is given that 13 claims in the amount of \$50,078.75 were received for payment during the period March 1, 2015 - March 31, 2015.

There were 13 paid and 0 denied.

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates, in Degree Decimal Minutes, of reported underwater obstructions are:

29 13.443	90 04.318	LAFOURCHE
29 20.610	89 34.580	PLAQUEMINES
29 21.400	91 33.874	SAINT MARY
29 22.785	89 21.570	PLAQUEMINES
29 23.683	90 29.899	TERREBONNE
29 24.478	89 58.114	JEFFERSON
29 35.422	91 42.634	IBERIA
29 35.651	89 35.015	PLAQUEMINES
29 41.664	89 41.954	PLAQUEMINES
29 43.189	89 14.705	SAINT BERNARD
29 44.574	89 16.655	SAINT BERNARD
29 52.446	89 19.282	SAINT BERNARD
30 03.495	89 46.566	ORLEANS

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 by calling (225) 342-9388.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) is hosting a Kids Fishing Day Camp for children 10 to 15 years of age at Woodworth Outdoor Education Center from July 6-9. Registration fees are \$75 per child and the registration deadline is June 30. For information visit [www.wlf.louisiana.gov/summerdaycamp](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/summerdaycamp).

The Gulf of Mexico Sea Grant Oil Spill Outreach Team has organized a seminar for Wednesday, May 20<sup>th</sup> in Lafayette, LA: ***Understanding the toxicity of oil and dispersant mixtures, and the development of alternative dispersants***. The seminar will be hosted by the Sierra Club-Acadian Group (please see flyer for more details). This seminar will now take place from 6:30-8:30 pm at University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Room 117 Mouton Hall.

The registration deadline for WETSHOP 2015 is May 20. The coastal awareness workshop for science, history and social studies teachers is scheduled for June 14 through 19, 2015 at LDWF's Grand Isle Fisheries Research Lab. Contact: [acapello@wlf.la.gov](mailto:acapello@wlf.la.gov).

## The Gumbo Pot

### Artichoke and Seafood Dip

Recipe courtesy of *Louisiana Kitchen & Culture*. For more recipes or to subscribe to their magazine or free newsletter, please visit <http://louisiana.kitchenandculture.com/>

#### Ingredients:

1 pound cooked artichoke hearts, chopped into small pieces  
1 cup mayonnaise  
1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese, plus more for topping  
1/2 pound Louisiana crab meat  
1/2 pound cooked Louisiana shrimp, chopped  
1/4 teaspoon Cayenne pepper  
1/4 cup dry breadcrumbs

#### Method:

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a medium mixing bowl combine artichokes, mayonnaise, 1 cup cheese, crab meat, shrimp, and Cayenne pepper. Spoon into a 1-quart oven-proof baking dish, top with bread crumbs and remaining Parmesan cheese. Bake, 25-30 minutes, until heated through and lightly browned. Remove from oven, serve at once with crackers or thinly sliced baguettes.



Courtesy of Louisiana Kitchen & Culture

If you have a favorite seafood recipe that you would like to share, please send it to Julie Lively [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 Lively at [janderson@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:janderson@agcenter.lsu.edu).**

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