

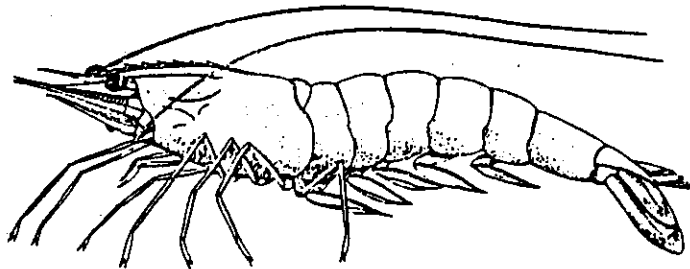


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SEA GRANT PROGRAM



LAGNIAPPE

FEDS ADOPT NEW TED RULES

The National Marine Fisheries Service is adopting new rules on required TED use similar to the ones they proposed last year. Under these rules a Shrimp Fishery/Sea Turtle Conservation Area (SFSTCA) has been created that covers the waters from the shoreline to 10 miles offshore in the area between South Pass of the Mississippi River westward to the US - Mexican border.

Within the SFSTCA the following regulations go into effect on March 1, 1997.

- * Outlaws the use of bottom-opening hard TEDs that have a webbing flap that goes back further than the back edge of the TED or with an angle of the deflector bars greater than 45 degrees measured along the bottom-most 4 inches of each bar.
- * Outlaws the use of soft TEDs.
- * Requires TEDs in any trawl nets that are larger than 12 feet headrope length and 15 feet footrope length.

Outside of the SFSTCA (everywhere else TEDs are required) the following regulations go into effect on December 19, 1997.

- * Outlaws the use of soft TEDs unless they can be modified to improve sea turtle release.
- * Requires TEDs in any try nets that are longer than 12 feet headrope length and 15 feet footrope length.

FINFISH BYCATCH AMENDMENT

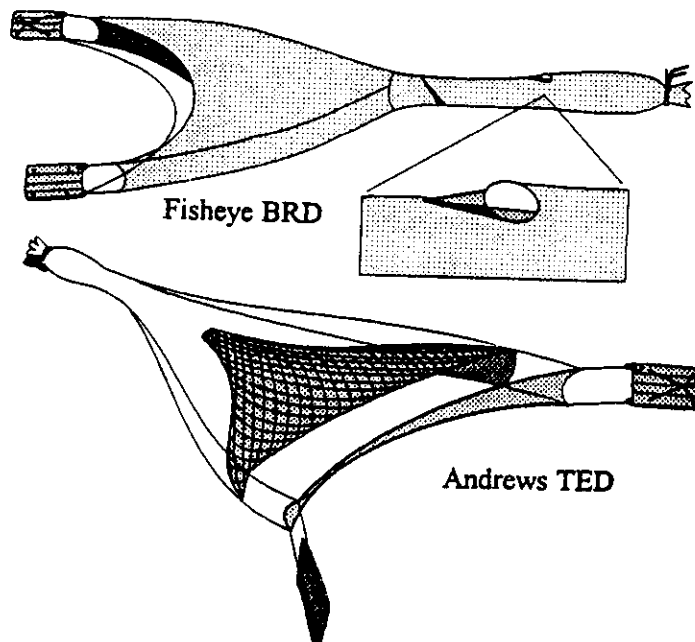
Amendment 9 to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's Shrimp Plan is still on track after its passage in November. Under the provisions of the amendment, all trawls used in federal waters west of Cape San Blas, Florida and within 100 fathoms will have to have bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) in them.

The only exceptions will be for try nets 16 feet or less, 16 foot or less rigid-frame roller trawls, royal red shrimp trawls used outside 100 fathoms and vessels trawling for groundfish or butterfish.

The two approved BRDs are :

- * The fisheye in the 30 mesh position or an equivalent distance from the top of a 120 mesh cod end bag of 1-5/8 inch mesh.
- * The 5-inch Andrews Soft TED

Interestingly enough, at the same time that the National Marine Fisheries Service is proposing to approve the use of the Andrews soft TED as a BRD, they are proposing to outlaw its use as a TED. This would mean that only the fisheye would be used as it would be difficult to use a soft TED as a BRD in the net and then still have a hard TED in the trawl to meet TED requirements. The final rule requiring BRD use will probably be effective around May, 1997.



FEDS PROPOSE NEW SHARK REGULATIONS

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has proposed new regulations for the commercial and recreational sharks fisheries of the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. These regulations were proposed because the 1996 Shark Evaluation Workshop results concluded that the large coastal shark group was still overfished.

Sharks are divided into three groups for management purposes, pelagic species, large coastal species, and small coastal species. Pelagic species are open-water sharks found away from land and are not heavily fished. Coastal species are found nearer to shore. The larger species are heavily fished for and are grouped separate from the smaller species which are not as heavily fished.

The new proposals are as follows:

- 1) A reduction in the yearly commercial quota of large coastal sharks to 1,285 metric tons (dressed weight). This is half of what it is now.
- 2) Creation of a 1,760 metric ton commercial quota for the small coastal shark group. This group is not overfished, but NMFS is proposing a quota to prevent overfishing because of fishermen shifting over to them due to the quota reduction on large coastal sharks.
- 3) A reduction in the limit on sharks for recreational fishermen. Currently sports fishermen have a limit of 5 small coastal sharks per person per day and a combined limit on large coastal and pelagic sharks of 4 per vessel per trip. NMFS proposes lowering the limit to a flat 2 sharks per vessel per trip no matter what species they are.
- 4) Outlaw all fishing for whale sharks, basking sharks, sand tiger sharks and bigeye sand tiger sharks.
- 5) Outlaw commercial harvest of great white sharks and require recreational fishermen to fish under a NMFS-approved tag-and-release program only for white sharks.
- 6) Outlaw the filleting of sharks at sea. Fishermen would still be permitted to gut their sharks and cut off the head and fins.
- 7) Emphasize the current regulation that requires that all reports on shark landings must be made by species.

FEDERAL SHARK LIMITED ENTRY

In August the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) proposed creating a limited entry program for shark fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean. The

reason for this proposal is to reduce fishing pressure which can cause overfishing and quota overruns. Sharks are considered to be severely overfished as a group, and in a separate action NMFS is proposing to cut commercial quotas in half as well as reduce recreational harvest.

According to NMFS, there are currently 2,700 fishermen who now hold commercial shark fishing permits, but fewer than 140 fishermen target and land sharks on a regular basis. NMFS plans to eliminate 2300 of the permits.

Under the proposal, of the remaining 413 permitted fishermen who land sharks, 134 fishermen who regularly fish directly for sharks will be placed in a "directed" fishery and the 279 other fishermen who catch and sell sharks will be placed in an "incidental" fishery.

To be permitted in either fishery, a fisherman must have held a valid federal shark permit at some time between July 1, 1994 and December 31, 1995, must have earned \$2,000 from commercial fishing in one of the last 3 years, must have documented landings of sharks and must own a vessel when the final rule is published.

To be permitted in the "directed" fishery, a fishermen must also have landed 250 sharks between January 1, 1991 and February 22, 1994 and 125 sharks between February 22, 1994 and June 30, 1995.

To be permitted in the "incidental" fishery a fishermen must have landed 3 sharks between January 1, 1991 and February 27, 1994 and 2 sharks between February 22, 1994 and June 30, 1995. Incidental permit holders will be restricted to a trip limit of 4 sharks per vessel per day.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER POLLUTION STUDY

The Mississippi River is one of Louisiana's most important resources. Its sediments built our marshes and swamps and the nutrients it carries fertilize the waters of the Gulf of Mexico. It supports a significant freshwater fishery in the river itself and it serves as our source of drinking water. The environmental health of the river is obviously important.

In order to assess the level of pollution in the river, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) conducted a four year study from 1990 to 1994 to determine what pollutants were in the river and their risk to human health.

The study analyzed 154 fish and shellfish samples taken from just below the Arkansas-Louisiana border and downstream of St. Francisville, Baton Rouge, Geismar, New Orleans and Venice.

DEQ sampled for seven groups of pollutants at first, but after two years narrowed the study down to testing for metals (such as mercury), pesticides and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

Mercury, the primary metal of concern, was found in 84% of the samples, however in very, very low levels. The level of mercury that would trigger a U.S. Food and Drug Agency (FDA) alert is 1.00 ppm (parts per million). The average level in the Mississippi River samples was only 0.06 ppm or one-seventeenth the alert level. The highest level of mercury found in any one sample was still only about one-third (0.38 ppm) the alert level. Mercury does not cause cancer, but in high levels can cause nerve damage or birth defects.

PCBs, a chemical pollutant that is in the news a lot, were found in much lower levels than even mercury was. The average amount of PCBs was only four-one thousandth of what would be needed for a health alert.

In a nutshell, Mississippi River fish and shellfish do not have mercury or PCB problems.

Pesticides were, however, found in slightly greater amounts. Dieldrin was found in one composite sample in a concentration of 0.80 ppm which is above the FDA alert level of 0.30. The good news is that the overall average of dieldrin for all the samples was only 0.01. At this level of concentration, the risk of a person getting cancer from eating one 8-ounce meal of Mississippi River fish per week for 70 years is about 1 in 10,000.

The conclusion of the report is as follows: "In summary, the likelihood of consuming sufficient fish, solely from the Mississippi River, of a single species, with any or significant levels of contaminants, and over a long enough period of time to cause harm is extremely low. As a result both the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality have agreed that there is no need for a fish consumption advisory on the Mississippi River."

Source: Mississippi River Toxins Inventory Project. Fish and Shellfish Sampling Plan-Final Report - July 1995. M. Henrich, A. Hindrichs and M. Fleming. LA Dept. of Environmental Quality.

SEAFOOD PROCESSORS TAX EXEMPTION

Louisiana Seafood Processors who own or lease vessels or have an exclusive contract with a commercial vessel are exempt from state sales and use taxes. This exemption was passed by the 1991 Louisiana Legislature as Act 896. I recently became aware that many seafood processors are not aware of this provision. Processors who would like to apply for the exemption should call the Louisiana Department of Revenue and Taxation in Baton Rouge at 925-7356 and request form number R-1345.

SEAGRASS AND SPECKLED TROUT

Researchers at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science have been studying the connection between marine grasses and catches of large speckled trout. They found an extremely strong correlation between the presence of sea grass and catches of large trout. The Chesapeake Bay had long been famous for its beds of wild celery. A new project will involve sampling for young speckled trout to determine if they too use grass beds more than open water.



Louisiana also has grass beds, especially in Lake Ponchartrain and near the Chandeleur Islands. Like in the Chesapeake Bay, Lake Ponchartrain's beds of wild celery or ribbon grass as it is locally known, have been declining. University of New Orleans researcher Dr. Michael Poirrier has seen a 50% decline in seagrasses in the lake from the mid 1970's to the mid 1980's. The south shore is the most affected.

According to Poirrier, the exact reasons for the decline are unknown but the growth of algae on the leaves of the sea grasses is suspected as a major cause. Increased algal growths are often associated with increased nutrients in water due to runoff or discharges into water bodies.

The beds of sea grasses near the Chandeleur Islands are of a different species called turtle grass. This grass tolerates much saltier water than wild celery. The lack of sea grass beds in other coastal waters appears not to be due to their decline but rather that these type of grasses do not grow well in soft-bottomed marsh habitats.

Virginia Information Source: Waterfront News Vol. 3, No. 1 Spring 1996. Virginia Sea Grant Program.

IS G.P.S. FOR YOU ?

Accurate navigation is important to both commercial and sportsfishermen. For years many commercial fishermen and some sportsfishermen have used LORAN to fix the position of their vessel or to return to a spot that they have preselected.

Relatively new to navigation is the use global positioning system (GPS). Unlike LORAN which uses land-based electronic signals to triangulate a position, GPS uses satellite signals. Originally designed for military use, GPS offers commercial and recreational users worldwide 24 hour navigation coverage to within 50 feet.

By knowing the position of 3 or more satellites and calculating various time differences between the transmitted signals, a GPS receiver can determine its position anywhere on earth. When moving, a GPS receiver continuously updates a vessel's position and provides speed and track information.

For the last three months, I have tested a hand-held GPS receiver under some difficult situations, including dense fog and high winds, in areas that have few visual landmarks to assist in navigation.

All in all, I was very pleased with the results. The GPS I used, consistently allowed me to navigate pre-set routes and avoid sandbars and stumps in almost zero visibility fog conditions. Almost without fail, the GPS receiver brought me to within 20 to 30 feet of where I wanted to end up.

Some observations:

- 1) GPS, in my opinion, has a definite place in the hands of waterfowl hunters and fishermen who travel open water, especially if weather conditions are poor, and for recreational and commercial fishermen that want to mark areas such as reefs that they may want to return to.
- 2) "Selective availability" is deliberate error built into the system because GPS without it is actually "too accurate" for the military to feel comfortable with it in unauthorized hands. A differential beacon receiver can be purchased for use with the receiver to reduce the built-in error for about \$500. A basic hand-held GPS receiver can be purchased for under \$300 and even the most complex console-mount receivers are under \$1000.
- 3) GPS is of limited use to hikers or people traveling in dense forests. The selective availability error tends to be worse the slower one travels. Hiking is slow travel. In forests, trees tend to interfere with satellite signals.

We plan to develop a slide show on the use of GPS by fishermen by this summer. With this slide show we will be able to make presentations on GPS use at fishermen's meetings.

FEDS PROPOSE MACKEREL MANAGEMENT CHANGES

The National Marine Fisheries Service is proposing several changes in the management of king and spanish mackerel in the Gulf of Mexico. Of least impact, is a reduction in the quota for spanish mackerel from 8.6 to 7.0 million pounds.

This would lower the commercial and recreational overall quota for this fish but would not result in a lower daily bag limit for recreational fishermen. The current quota for spanish mackerel has not been met since being put in place, but the quota reduction is still supposed to improve the rebuilding of the stock from overfished status.

A major change is proposed for king mackerel. The proposed change is to prohibit the captain and crew of charter and head boat vessels from keeping any of these fish. Currently the captain and crew as well as passengers on the charter boat are currently allowed to keep 2 king mackerel each.

The reason for this change is that in recent years, the recreational quota has been overfished. Much of the increased catch has been due to higher landings by the charter/headboat industry. This action was felt to cause less problems for the fishery than a reduction in the daily limit from 2 to 1 fish for all recreational fishermen or a closed season.

RECREATIONAL CRABBING

In 1989, the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries conducted an intensive survey of recreational crabbing in Terrebonne Parish. No such study has been conducted statewide, however, results of this study are most interesting. Remember that the figures presented below apply only to Terrebonne Parish.

- * Recreational crabbers made 71,790 trips in 1989.
- * They caught 1,307,580 crabs weighing 190,740 lbs.
- * Field surveys showed that both people who crab from the bank (land-based) or from a boat with a trawl make 6-8 trips per year.
- * Of the crabbers who crab from the bank, 71% used hand lines and 25% used drop nets.
- * The best bait was chicken or turkey parts and fish was one of the poorest of baits.
- * The average size for crabs caught by land-based crabbers was 5.3 inches and for boat crabbers using trawls, it was 7.0 inches. About 40% of crabs kept by land-based crabbers and 10% of crabs kept by recreational trawlers were below the minimum five inch commercial size limit. There is no legal minimum size for recreationally caught crabs.
- * A saltwater angler license holder mail survey showed that about one-third of them went crabbing in 1989.
- * Almost 45% of these who crabbed, owned or had access to a camp and 20% were occasional campers.
- * A survey of recreational crab trap license holders showed that 75% of the Terrebonne residents crabbed.
- * Of the same license holders 85% of them owned or had unlimited access to a camp.

* Overall, recreational trap users averaged 7.2 traps each, used them almost 12 times each and averaged slightly over 60 crabs each time they set their traps.

Source: A survey of the Recreational Blue Crab Fishery in Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana, by Vincent Guillory. Proceedings of the Blue Crab Symposium (In press) 1996.

THE GUMBO POT

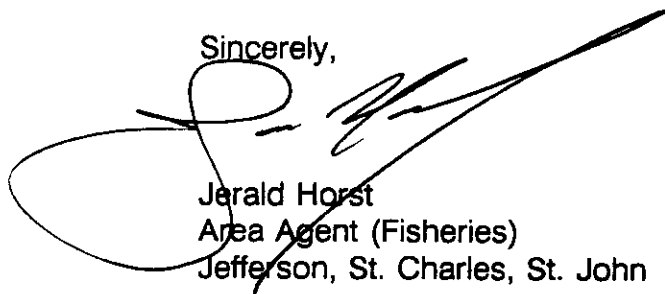
Oyster Bordelaise

This month's recipe is from Dr. John Supan, LSU Oyster researcher and Louisiana's oyster ambassador-at-large.

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|----|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | qt oysters (drained) | 6 green onions (chopped and separated into tops and bottoms) |
| 3 | tbsp crushed garlic | french bread |
| 1 | bay leaf | margarine or butter |
| 12 | oz spaghetti | parmesan cheese |
| 1 | inch slice lemon | olive oil |

Cover bottom of large skillet with olive oil, saute onion bottoms , bay leaf and garlic. Add oysters and saute until edges curl. Squeeze juice and add lemon into mixture and stir and cook for about 5 minutes. Add mixture and green onion tops to cooked, drained spaghetti, mix, then cover for ten minutes. Remix, then serve with parmesan cheese to taste and hot, buttered french bread.

Sincerely,



Jerald Horst
Area Agent (Fisheries)
Jefferson, St. Charles, St. John

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