

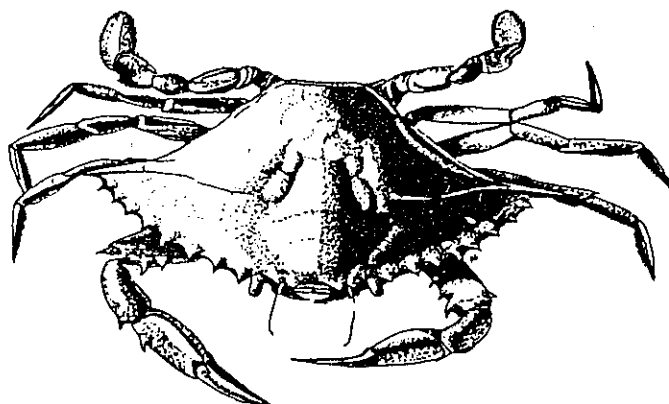


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SEA GRANT PROGRAM



LAGNIAPPE

BLUE CRAB MEETINGS SCHEDULED

The Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service will be holding its third annual Coastal Fishing Workshop in March. The title of this workshop is **Coastal Fishing '97: Use of Louisiana's Blue Crab Resource**. The program is designed to bring crab fishermen and processors up to date with the latest research and biology on blue crabs.

Blue crabs are very important recreationally and commercially. Commercial blue crab landings in 1995 were worth almost \$30 million. Additionally, 3,152 recreational crab trap licenses were sold last year. Recreational crabbers using drop nets and trotlines don't need any more than their basic license, so they aren't counted.

Crab management has become an issue in recent years because some people have complained about what they feel are lower numbers of crabs.

The workshops will focus on five topics:

- * Biological condition of the resource
- * Who is catching the crabs in Louisiana
- * How crabs are managed in other states
- * A Louisiana Blue Crab Task Force report
- * Proposed bills on blue crabs for the 1997 legislature.

The meetings in this area will both be on **Tuesday, March 11** and are free. The **2:00 p.m.** meeting will be at the St. Bernard Parish Council chambers at 8201 West Judge Perez Dr. in Chalmette. The **6:00 p.m.** meeting will be at the Westbank Regional Library at 2751 Manhattan Blvd. in Harvey. The meetings are expected to last 2 to 2 ½ hours.

FRESHWATER DIVERSION

The use of freshwater diversion projects from the Mississippi River to restore coastal marshes is a subject more in the news than ever. I get many requests from people on all sides of the issue for information on the possible affects of freshwater diversion on fisheries. Unfortunately, people on one side of the issue or another misquote or partially quote my responses as it suits their needs. I will attempt here, in print, to outline the science on the issue.

We can "hang our hat" on five researched-based conclusions:

- 1) Our coastal wetlands were built by sediments delivered by the Mississippi River over thousands of years.
- 2) The natural cycle of these wetlands was for them to be built by the river in one area and to erode or sink below sea level in other areas. Since man has channeled and dredged these areas and put levees on the Mississippi River preventing it from bringing sediments to the wetlands, they are disappearing much more rapidly than they are being built.
- 3) Louisiana's coastal fisheries are produced from these wetlands. When enough of them disappear, scientists agree that fisheries will decline.
- 4) Scientists agree that sediments are necessary to rebuild these wetlands and that using freshwater from the river to carry these sediments is the most **practical** and **economic** means of delivering these sediments.
- 5) Three decades of fisheries research show that most of our commercially and recreationally important marine fish and shellfish are affected by freshwater. Extensive research conducted by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries shows that the size of the spring brown shrimp crop is directly related to the amount of marsh acreage that has salinity levels of 10 ppt (parts per thousand) or higher (As modified by water temperature). The more acreage in high salinities, the more production. The research also indicates that where these salinities occur is important. If the waters above 10 ppt are located in the upper areas of the marshes where a lot of marsh grasses still exist, brown shrimp production is better than if these salinities are found lower in the estuaries which are mostly open water. An unknown factor is whether a possible increase in white shrimp production will offset the potential drop in brown shrimp production.

Other marine fisheries resources will also likely be affected. The effects may be a shift in the areas of production to areas lower in the estuaries. There will, of course, be some social and economic impacts. For example, some oyster farmers have several decades of effort and investment in the beds they currently lease.

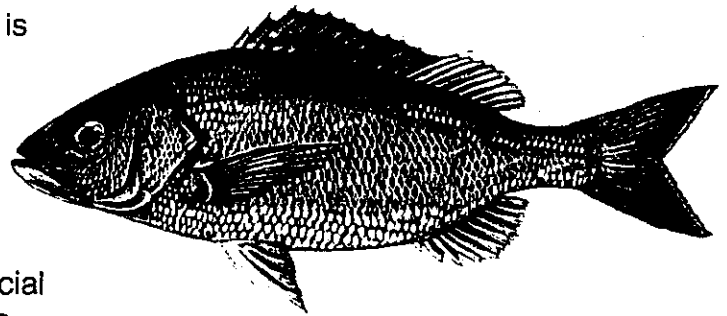
Finally, there may likely be an increase in freshwater fisheries resources. Commercially, marine fisheries are more valuable pound-for-pound than freshwater fisheries. Recreationally, this **may** affect fishermen by providing more bass fishing opportunities and less speckled trout fishing opportunities, for example.

Ultimately, the decisions on freshwater diversion will involve trade-offs, as most decisions do. **Are the possible biological, social, and economic losses or changes in fisheries production today worth the hoped-for and expected benefits to restoring our marshes for tomorrow?** You as individuals and Louisiana policy and law makers must make the decision.

B-LINER REGULATIONS COMING

The vermilion snapper or b-liner, as it is locally known, is an important commercial and recreational fish in Louisiana. In 1995, commercial fishermen landed 748,391 pounds of this fish worth \$1,393,157 in Louisiana. Recreational fishermen do not fish for this fish as much as commercial fishermen, because b-liners tend to concentrate more around large underwater "rocks" than around oil and gas platforms.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's Reef Fish Stock Assessment Panel is meeting to develop regulations that would create total allowable catch levels, quotas and bag limits. Their intent is to lower the harvest of this fish.



Currently the fish is managed with an 8-inch minimum size and no commercial quota. Recreational fishermen have the same minimum size and a limit (combined with lane snapper, porgies, trigger fish and tilefish) of 20 per person.

FISH LANDINGS

During the legislative debate on House Bill 815 which became the Act 1316 (the gill net law), there was disagreement on how well the commercial market for fish could be supplied if the bill was passed. Listed below are the landings of inshore commercial fish in 1996 compared to 1995. All 1996 figures are considered preliminary until the final annual landings report is issued.

MONTH	BLACK DRUM		FLOUNDER		MULLET	
	1995	1996	1995	1996	1995	1996
1	313,922	191,689	32,551	16,372	719,157	333,640
2	298,431	190,154	17,582	3,902	790,981	0
3	815,528	116,962	23,736	4,966	750,428	0
4	367,605	99,641	37,216	2,857	558,516	0
5	176,277	16,652	47,318	636	549,657	0
6	220,485	23,285	47,043	787	390,990	0
7	294,123	48,724	51,740	806	567,201	0
8	258,384	85,875	54,810	960	686,284	0
9	45,238	61,168	15,404	2,874	199,708	0
10	88,251	108,033	36,470	11,946	3,583,658	4,594,528
11	48,919	148,612	109,971	10,742	4,287,097	2,442,786
12	72,275	172,141	59,331	3,096	1,461,933	670,570
TOTAL	2,999,438	1,262,936	533,172	59,944	14,545,610	8,041,524

MONTH	POMPANO		SPOTTED SEATRUT		SHEEPSHEAD	
	1995	1996	1995	1996	1995	1996
1	2,998	821	241,711	221,887	509,236	280,545
2	158	15	195,398	152,919	504,335	281,498
3	431	62	60,013	0	681,200	577,022
4	601	34	0	0	596,722	775,334
5	1,961	1,041	0	0	219,521	63,290
6	10,935	6,307	0	0	149,039	9,506
7	19,077	0	0	0	112,276	9,861
8	15,297	8,886	0	0	100,512	26,591
9	14,542	17,775	0	0	14,013	51,635
10	1,814	1,469	0	0	73,805	95,655
11	6,871	6,871	16,828	90,317	166,654	200,897
12	8,304	8,304	142,851	245,109	139,169	134,129
TOTAL	82,989	43,397	656,801	710,232	3,266,482	2,505,963

There are no mullet landings after January because the season closes January 15. The flounder regulations restricting fishermen to 10 fish per person did not go into effect until May, so that didn't impact the first four months. Speckled trout season with nets closed on March 1, so any landings in March are from the commercial rod and reel fishery.

In the table below are the prices received by fishermen for the same species in both years, the average price per pound and the percent change in price from 1995 to 1996.

SPECIES	1995		1996		PRICE CHANGE/LB
	\$TOTAL	\$/LB	\$TOTAL	\$/LB	
BLACK DRUM	2,332,328	.78	801,110	.63	-19%
FLOUNDER	756,575	1.42	69,652	1.17	-18%
MULLET	9,880,983	.68	5,398,423	.67	-1%
POMPANO	288,579	3.48	135,813	3.12	-10%
SPOTTED SEATRUT	625,295	.95	711,218	1.00	+ 5%
SHEEPSHEAD	1,100,620	.34	2,505,963	.29	-15%

SEAFOOD DEALER TRUCKS

Seafood dealers occasionally or regularly use trucks to pick up and deliver seafood, especially during periods of heavy production. According to Sgt. Jeff Mayne of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Enforcement Division, it is legally required that any such truck must be identified on both sides with the name and address of the seafood company for when the load is being transported for. According to Mayne, the Louisiana statues under which this is required are 56:307.7, 45:167, 47:712.c and 47:478.

MARINE ADVISORY BOARD NEWS

In 1996, the Jefferson Parish Marine Fisheries Advisory Board requested the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to stock Florida-strain largemouth bass in westbank marshes near freshwater diversion outfalls. Marine Advisory Board member Randy Gros, who brought the idea to the board, felt that the freshwater diversion projects in place in the area have created possibilities for a very good largemouth bass fishery.

Department of Wildlife and Fisheries District 8 Biologist Supervisor, Howard Rogillio, agrees and has "placed an order" for 300,000 Florida-strain largemouth bass fingerlings a year for 3 years, from the Department's new fish hatchery near Beechwood, Louisiana. Rogillio is hopeful that adding Florida strain bass to the existing bass population will produce somewhat larger fish.

SPORTFISHING STATISTICS

The American Sportfishing Association recently released a 72 page booklet on recreational fishing statistics in the United States. In looking through it to see where Louisiana stood, I found some interesting information about the state and the national recreational fishery.

Louisiana ranked 17th in the number of recreational fishing licenses sold among the 50 states in 1991. Louisiana anglers fish more days than average, as the state ranked 13th in number of days fished.

Louisiana ranked 35th in the number of out-of-state anglers coming into the state to fish. When non-resident anglers were considered as a percentage of all the state's fishermen, Louisiana ranked even lower, 44th out of 50 states. Obviously, we don't do a good job of attracting the tourist angler and his dollars.

Louisiana recreational fishermen spend somewhat more money per fisherman than average, coming in 12th out of 50. In 1991, recreational fishing accounted for \$622,034,000 in expenditures and created 18,404 jobs. What Louisiana fishermen spend their money on is interesting compared to other states. The table below shows what they spent their money on in 1991, the dollar amount spent, and where we rank nationally. If Louisiana fishermen spent money equally on all types of purchases we would rank 17th in all categories.

ITEM	NATIONAL RANK	\$ EXPENDITURES
Food and beverage	13	94,781,955
Lodging	32	9,699,820
Boat fuel	3	62,240,006
Guide fees	22	1,519,210
Pack trip/package fees	32	735,618
Boat launch fees	4	9,487,236
Boat mooring, storage & maint.	23	39,351,812
Equipment rental	29	1,498,424
Bait	11	28,044,758
Ice	4	14,483,589
Fishing rods	14	20,668,178
Reels	10	17,896,972
Lines	20	4,209,679
Artificial lures	16	16,986,144
Tackle boxes	6	2,690,587
Creels, nets & stringers	10	1,193,399
Traps & Seines	10	911,733
Depth Finders	10	7,442,276
Spearfishing gear	5	599,073
Camping equipment	32	3,102,831
Clothing & waders	23	2,679,453
Processing & taxidermy	13	1,232,581
Magazines	14	2,211,226
Dues/contributions	8	2,756,192
Bass boats	6	30,145,061
Motor boats	14	31,830,330
Canoes	20	1,189,226
Boat motors & accessories	4	34,801,606
Pickup, campers & vans	10	60,003,987
Licenses	10	7,848,289
Purchased property (camps,etc)	9	81,320,044
Leased property (camps,etc)	9	4,500,598

Louisiana fishermen spend much more than average on boat fuel, boat launching, ice, bass boats and boat motors and accessories, and quite a bit less than average on guide fees and pack trips/package fees (arranged fishing trips). This seems to show that compared to other states our fishermen are more do-it-yourselfers. Notice also that while we rank 17th in number of fishermen we rank 10th in the amount we spend on licenses. Notice also that Louisiana fishermen rank fairly high in dues and contributions, which I assume are made to sportsmen's clubs and associations.

The booklet also showed the 10 year (1984-1993) trends in fishing license sales state by state. Nationally, (although 17 states had a decline in fishing license sales), overall license sales showed an overall 4% gain in numbers. In the gulf states only

Louisiana (+7%) and Florida showed a gain (+29%). Alabama (-10%), Mississippi (-9%) and Texas (-5%) showed declines.

The Northeast U. S. showed the strongest increases in licenses sales followed by the Midwest-Great Lakes states and the Mid-Atlantic states. A survey of boating showed that 20% of the U.S. population participates in boating. The range is from 9.1% in Rhode Island to 52.3% in (of all places) South Dakota. In Louisiana, the number is 15.5%.

Finally, the statistics showed that only a little over 5% of the sport fishermen in the U. S. participated in any fishing tournament, contest, or derby. Also, something over 12% of nation's recreational fishermen participated in fly-fishing. This may be the fastest-growing sport in fishing.

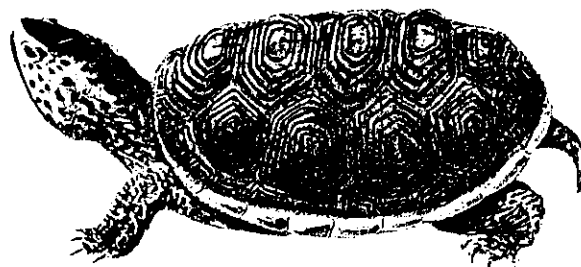
Source: Compendium of Sportfishing Statistics, by V. Maharaj and M. Athey. American Sportfishing Association. June, 1996.

T.E.D.S FOR CRAB TRAPS

Fisheries managers in New Jersey are proposing a regulation which would require the use of a small turtle excluder device (TED) on any crab trap set within 50 feet of the shore. The turtle they are trying to exclude is the diamondback terrapin, a small salt marsh turtle that lives along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts.

The proposed TED is simply a coat hanger bent into a 4 inch by 8 inch rectangle. Concern over this turtle has already caused the closing of a cove in Barnegat Bay to commercial crabbing. Some crabbers are worried that the TED will not only exclude turtles but also the larger, more valuable male crabs.

In recent years, the turtles numbers in New Jersey have decreased due to shoreside development and road building.



COAST GUARD COMMERCIAL FISHING BOOTHS

The U. S. Coast Guard's Commercial Fishing Vessel Safety Coordinator for this area, David Johnson, will again have informational safety booths at two area fishing vessel supply stores. Coast Guard staff will be present to answer any questions on fishing vessel safety laws.

The first booth will be at Alario Brothers Hardware and Marine Supplies, 894 Avenue A in Westwego on March 26, 27 and 28. The booth will be manned from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. both days.

The second booth will be at Fishermens Net Company, 4540 Downman Road in New Orleans on April 2, 3 and 4. Hours are also 10:00 a.m. till 2:00 p.m.

THE GUMBO POT

Fish Courtbouillon

I have to thank Betty and Roland Trahan of Harvey for this great recipe. This is one of their signature dishes. I've learned more from their innovative cooking styles than almost anyone else. It is important to note that this is a "brown" rather than a "red" courtbouillon. It does not have the strong "bite" that red courtbouillons frequently have. I have used this recipe with everything from speckled trout and redfish to freshwater catfish. I know that you will enjoy it!

3/4 c. cooking oil

2/3 c. flour

1 large onion chopped

1 medium bell pepper chopped

2 stalks celery

3 cloves garlic

1 can diced tomatos with green chili peppers

1 8 oz. can tomato sauce

6 drops liquid crab boil

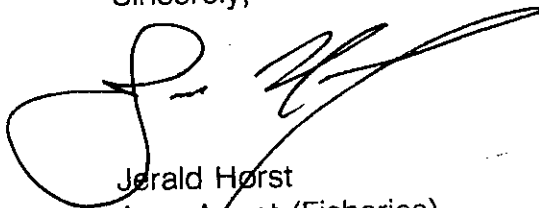
1 tbsp lemon pepper

1 tbsp parsley

1 1/2 lb fish fillets

Make a roux by browning the flour in oil in heavy pot, stirring constantly. Add onion, bell pepper, celery, garlic. Cook until veggies wilt. Add tomatos, tomato sauce and 2 tomato cans of water, crab boil, lemon pepper and parsley. Allow to simmer about 2 hours. Add fish, and salt to taste. Cook 15 minutes or until fish is done. Serve over cooked rice. Serves 4 or 6 generously.

Sincerely,



Jerald Horst

Area Agent (Fisheries)

Jefferson, St. Charles, St. John