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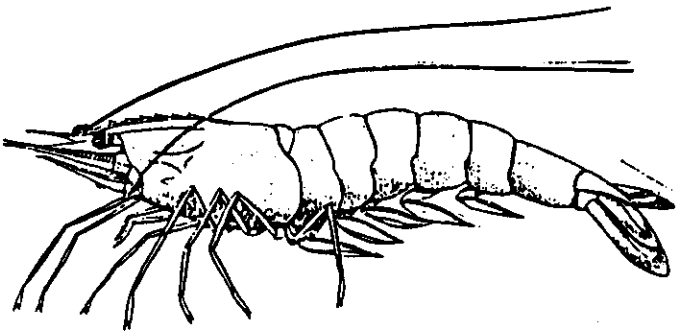
SEA GRANT PROGRAM



LAGNIAPPE

RECORD BOOKS AND TAX EXEMPT FORMS

Over the years, many of you have used the Extension Service's Commercial Fishermans and Trappers Record Books to keep a record of your expenses and earnings. With the new year upon us, this is a good time to get your new record book.

Also available are the sales tax exemption applications for commercial fishermen. If you would like an application or record book, call, write, or come by my office in Marrero.

TED RULES GOING INTO EFFECT

Under rules adopted in January 1997, there are two changes on TED regulations effective December 19, 1997. They are as follows:

1) TEDs are required in any try nets that are longer than 12 feet headrope length and 15 feet footrope length.

2) Soft TEDs will no longer be allowed for use in trawls.

These rules apply to **all waters, inshore and offshore.** Previously these rules had only applied to waters from the shoreline out to 10 miles offshore in the area between South Pass of the Mississippi River and the U. S. - Mexican Border.

FEDS TESTING NEW BRD

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) researchers are testing a new bycatch reduction device (BRD) that was developed by shrimp vessel captains Leroy Jones and Harry Davis of Freeport, Texas. This new BRD has a webbing cone behind the funnel that acts as a fish stimulator and discourages fish from passing into the cod end of the trawl.

The Jones/Davis BRD uses the basic principal of the expanded mesh and extended funnel BRD except that fish escape openings are created by cutting windows around the funnel instead of using large mesh sections.

Jones/David BRD

The Jones/Davis BRD shows good fish exlusion, with an average red snapper reduction of about 40% and an overall reduction in fish catch of 58%. Shrimp loss rates have been 4% in their tests.

NMFS gear technicians have adapted the Jones/Davis cone modifications to the expanded mesh BRD and are testing it on several commercial vessels.

Modified Expanded Mesh BRD

Source: *Report on the Results of Evaluations of the Jones/Davis BRD.* John W. Watson, Daniel G. Foster, and Arvind Shah. National Marine Fisheries Service. 1997

TRAWL SIZE LIMITS

Shrimpers that work in beach waters are reminded that after January 1, 1998, there will be a limit on the amount of webbing that they can use. Act 262 of the 1997 legislature placed a limit of 130 feet of cork line and 165 feet of lead line for all of a vessel's trawls combined. This does **not** include the try net.

This law applies to state territorial waters which is the beach to, in most places, 3 miles offshore. In some areas, such as off of Grand Isle, territorial waters extend to beyond 3 miles. If you have any doubt, consult standard navigational charts which clearly show where the line is.

FLOODS ARE GOOD FOR BASS

Spring river floods are usually considered bad news for people, but Illinois researchers have determined that they are good for largemouth bass. Most river floods take place in the spring due to spring rains and snow melt. This is also when largemouth bass spawn.

The researchers used shocking machines to sample bass in years of high flood waters and years of low flood waters between 1990 and 1995 in the Illinois River. The percentage of young-of-the-year bass was calculated from the samples.

In the years of high spring floods (1990,1993, and 1995), young-of-the-year bass made up 20% of the total catch. The strong spawning year-classes continued to show up in high numbers in following years. In years of low spring floods (1991, 1992 and 1994) young-of-the-year bass only made up 7% of the samples.

The researchers felt that the floods provided more high-quality areas for bass to nest on and a better food supply of young forage fish for them to feed upon.

In Louisiana, we have many rivers which flood over their flood plain during high water periods. The largest is the Atchafalaya River which floods most of the Atchafalaya Basin. Other such rivers are the Pearl, Red, Black, and Ouachita. Most of the Mississippi River, except for a small portion in West Feliciana parish, is confined within levees and cannot flood its flood plain.

Source: *River Levels and Largemouth Bass Population in the Illinois River.* Paul T. Raibley and Richard E. Sparks. Illinois Natural History Survey Reports. March/April, 1997.

HAPPY AS A CLAM (OR AN OYSTER)

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has released its latest National Shellfish Register of Classified Growing Waters and the news is good. The register shows an **increase** of 2.9 million acres and 1058 shellfish growing areas during the 1991-1995 period covered by the register, as compared to 1990 figures. Possible shellfish growing waters fall into the five classifications below (as well as unclassified).

Growing Water Classifications

Approved Waters - Growing waters from which shellfish may be harvested for direct marketing. Fecal coliform median or geometric mean most probable number (MPN) does not exceed 14 per 100 ml, and not more than 10 percent of the samples exceed an MPN of 43 per 100 ml for a 5-tube decimal dilution test.

Conditionally Approved Waters - Growing waters meeting approved classification standards under predictable conditions. These waters are open to harvest when water quality standards are met, and are closed at other times. Fecal coliform standards are the same as for approved waters (see above).

Restricted Waters - Growing waters from which shellfish may be harvested only if they are relayed or depurated before direct marketing. Fecal coliform median or geometric mean MPN does not exceed 88 per 100 ml, and not more than 10 percent of the samples exceed an MPN of 260 per 100 ml for a 5-tube decimal dilution test.

Conditionally Restricted - Growing waters that do not meet the criteria for restricted waters if subjected to intermittent micro-biological pollution, but may be harvested if shellfish are subjected to a suitable purification process. Fecal coliform standards same as for restricted waters (see above).

Prohibited Waters- Growing waters from which shellfish may not be harvested for marketing under any conditions.

Unclassified Waters - Growing waters that are part of a state's shellfish program but are inactive. There is no harvesting, and the state does not conduct any water quality monitoring or maintain a sanitary survey.

The total area of approved waters is at an all-time high of 14.8 million acres (59 percent of all classified waters). There were 2.8 million acres of prohibited waters (13 percent of all classified waters) reported in 1995. The only register year that had less prohibited acreage was 1966 (2.0 million acres), and the percentage of prohibited waters has never been below 20 percent in any previous register.

Nationally, 6.7 million acres of shellfish-growing waters are harvest-limited. For 72 percent (4.9 million acres) of these waters, the limitation was attributed to water quality. Thirteen percent (873,000 acres) were attributed to administrative decisions, 8 percent (566,000 acres) lacked a complete and up-to-date sanitary survey, and less than 1 percent (119 acres) were limited for conservation reasons. For 13 percent (888,000 acres), the state shellfish management personnel could not provide information regarding the basis for harvest limitation.

The top five pollution sources reported as contributing to harvest limitations were urban runoff (40 percent, 2.7 million acres), upstream sources (39 percent, 2.6 million acres), wildlife (38 percent, 2.5 million acres), individual waste water treatment systems (32 percent, 2.2 million acres), and waste water treatment plants (24 percent, 1.6 million acres). For 350 harvest-limited growing waters (accounting for 6 percent, 544, 000 acres) the state shellfish management personnel could not provide information on contributing pollution sources.

Compared to the 1990 register, there is a significant decrease in the acreage that is harvest-limited due to pollution from industry, waste water treatment plants, and direct discharges. There is an increase in the acreage limited by boating, marinas, urban runoff and agricultural runoff.

Over 77 million pounds (meat weight) of oysters, clams, and mussels were harvested from these waters in 1995, having a dockside value of $200 million.

RED SNAPPER ENDORSEMENTS

The National Marine Fisheries Service recently released a list of all holders of Gulf of Mexico Commercial Red Snapper Endorsements. This endorsement allows a commercial reef fish permit holder to land up to 2000 pounds of red snapper per trip during open season. Reef fish permit holders without an endorsement may only land 200 pounds of red snapper per trip. The 129 red snapper endorsements were broken down by state as follows:

STATE	NUMBER OF ENDORSEMENTS
Florida	55
Texas	43
Louisiana	16
Alabama	8
Mississippi	6
Maryland	1

KEMP'S RIDLEY NESTS UP AGAIN IN 1997

After a moderate increase in 1996, the number of Kemp's ridley sea turtle nests took a big jump upward in 1997. This turtle nests almost exclusively on one beach in Mexico and its decline has brought on the mandatory use of TEDs in an effort to save it.

YEAR	NUMBER OF NESTS
1978	924
1979	954
1980	868
1981	897
1982	750
1983	746
1984	798
1985	702
1986	744
1987	737
1988	842
1989	878
1990	992
1991	1155
1992	1275
1993	1184
1994	1568
1995	1938
1996	2080
1997	2387

A total of 149,567 hatchling turtles were produced from the 1997 nests, as compared to 119,196 the previous year.

Source: Leslie Dierauf, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

CRAB TRAP ESCAPE RING LAW GOING INTO EFFECT

Act 302 of the 1997 Louisiana Legislature requires that beginning January 1, 1998, that crab traps used in Louisiana must have escape rings in them for much of the year. This applies to recreational as well as commercial traps.

According to the law, each trap must have 2 escape rings, each with an inside diameter of 2-5/16 inches. One must be in the upper chamber, on the side of the trap even with the baffle. The other one must be in the lower chamber, on the side of the trap

even with the trap floor. Escape rings can be attached to the trap using the trap wires. No more than 4 wires or fasteners may be used.

Escape rings in traps may be blocked or crab traps without escape rings may be used during the periods of March 1 through June 30, and September 1 through October 31 of each year.

The only exception to the mandatory use of escape rings is in Lake Ponchartrain. In this lake, any fisherman that holds a softshell crab shedders license does not have to use escape rings in his crab traps.

CHRISTMAS TREE/MARSH RESTORATION PROJECT

Volunteers are once again needed for the Jefferson Parish Christmas Tree/Marsh Restoration Project. Trees will be placed in wooden cribs, forming a brush fence, which will protect wetlands from erosion and restore wetlands as sediments fall out behind the fence.

Christmas trees should be placed curbside in Jefferson Parish on Wednesday, January 7 for collection on January 8, 9, and 10. They should be free of lights, flocking, and tinsel, and the stand should be removed. Trees should not be placed in a plastic bag.

This is a labor-intensive project. Hundreds of volunteers are needed to bundle the trees, which will be air-lifted by the Louisiana Army National Guard into pre-constructed cribs, at a later date. This activity does require some strength, and is open to individuals 15 years of age or older. Scheduled workdates for tree bundling are shown below (alternate dates due to bad weather are in parentheses).

January 10, 1998 (January 11, 1998)
January 17, 1998 (January 18, 1998)
January 24, 1998 (January 25, 1998)
January 31, 1998 (February 1, 1998)

For more information, call the Jefferson Parish Environmental Department at 736-6440.

TEXAS SHRIMP LICENSE BUYBACK PROGRAM

In 1995, Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPWD) was granted authority to create a Limited Entry Plan for the Texas inshore shrimp fishery. This plan allows TPWD to restrict the number of licenses sold and create a license buyback program for individuals who choose not to participate in the fishery.

There have been two rounds of commercial bay and bait shrimp license buybacks since of the limited entry program went into effect. During the first round, in November 1996, TPWD purchased a total of 30 licenses from 200 applicants for $101,820 or an average price of $4,394 per license. Seventeen bay and 13 bait licenses were purchased. The second round of buybacks was concluded in early September, 1997. The department purchased a total of 37 licenses from 178 applicants for a total of $126,687. The average price paid per license was $3,424. Twenty bay and 17 bait licenses were purchased.

The voluntary buyback program is conducted at least once each year if funds are available. Purchase of licenses is conducted through a reverse bid process. The shrimper evaluates the value of his license, then submits a bid to TPWD. The department estimates the value of each license based on criteria, such as license history and vessel length, and compares each offer against all other bids received during the period.

The outlook is that continued funds will be available for buybacks from the 15% set-aside from license fees. To date, about 2% of the original licenses have been brought back by TPWD. Provisions also allow outside organizations to assist in funding the buyback program. These outside organizations may not possess or broker a shrimping license, but may donate money to the buyback fund or act as an agent on behalf of TPWD.

Source: *Calhoun Currents. Vol. 1 No. 4* John P. O'Connell. Texas Sea Grant Marine Advisory Service.

FEDERAL LICENSE BUYBACKS NOW POSSIBLE

Fisheries managers have long recognized that in some commercial fisheries there are too many fishermen for the fishery to profitably or biologically support. The 1996 Magnuson Stevens Act as passed by U. S. Congress has opened the door to a possible remedy to the problem of too many boats in a fishery -- a "buyback program". Under the program, a fisherman could **voluntarily** sell his fishing permit to the government, which would retire it. The vessels must either be scraped or restrictions placed on the title to prevent further fishing.

Provisions are in place that allow funding for buybacks to be paid by the industry itself, public and private organizations, or the federal government. Government funded programs must be requested by the region's Fishery Management Council. Industry funded buybacks do not need Council participation. In this case, the fishermen would have to vote to approve such a program. Two-thirds of these voting would have to approve it.

Governors in state fisheries can also request the National Marine Fisheries Service to begin a buyback program. This would most likely occur in situations where fishermen fish for a species in both federal and state waters.

Obviously, the fishery would already have to be under limited entry, as buying licenses back in an open fishery would be useless, as other people could enter the fishery to replace those who sold their permit. The fishery would also have to require permits to participate in the fishery. Some fisheries, such as the shrimp fishery in federal waters, do not require a permit, so no permit exists to buy from fishermen.

PUTTING NUTRIA ON THE MENU

Large nutria populations have long been recognized as contributing to the loss of Louisiana's fragile coastal marshes, because of their tremendous appetite for the vegetation that holds the marsh together. Nutria, which are not native to Louisiana, were controlled for many years by fur trappers. With the bust in fur prices, few trappers trap the marshes, and nutria populations have boomed.

A 1996 survey conducted in the Barataria and Terrebonne estuaries showed about a 25% increase in the amount of acres of marsh damaged by nutria since 1993. This wetland loss is usually permanent. The survey showed the need for a system that would increase nutria harvest. In response, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the National Marine Fisheries Service put together a proposal for an imaginative new program. Its aim is to increase the demand for their meat.

The five year project will match funds from the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (Breaux Bill) with those of participating processing plants, to increase the value of nutria. Participating processors would be able to get nutria at a cost quite a bit cheaper than other meats. Processors will purchase nutria from trappers at current market price. Through Breaux Bill funding, the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries will pay trappers an extra dollar for each nutria that they judge suitable for human consumption. Nutria that don't make the grade will be purchased at market price and processed as food for alligator farms.

Total funds requested for the project are $2,070,000. Currently, only $400,000 is available, which will be spent on marketing activities, establishment of program rules and regulations, and a coastwide habitat damage survey. The remaining funds will be allocated next spring and incentive payments to processors and trappers are scheduled to begin in November, 1998.

CHINESE CRAWFISH TARIFF IMPACTS

On August 29, 1997, the United States International Trade Commission (USITC) voted 4-0 in favor of the Crawfish Processors Alliance petition that crawfish tail meat from China had materially injured Louisiana crawfish tail meat processors. This ruling concluded a year-long investigation by the USITC and the U. S. Department of Commerce.

The decision means that an importer bringing Chinese tail meat into the U. S. must make a cash deposit equal to an average of 123 percent of the stated wholesale value. This cash deposit will have to be made on any imports of Chinese tail meat brought into this country since March 26, 1997.

The ruling has had an immediate impact on the crawfish industry. Any tail meat imported since March 26 is now more expensive. If the Chinese tail meat arrives with a wholesale value of $2.50 per pound, and the tariff is 123 percent, $3.08 is added to the $2.50. The total wholesale cost for the importer is now $5.58 per pound. Louisiana processors feel they can be competitive in this price range. Imports during the first half of 1996 were 10 million pounds. For the first half of 1997, imports of Chinese tail meat have dropped to less than 1 million pounds.

Customs agents and U. S. Department of Commerce officials look for companies trying to avoid paying the tariff on imports. Different companies in China were assigned tariffs ranging from 92% to 202% based on their willingness to cooperate in the investigation. Companies with higher tariff percentages might try to ship tail meat under a company name that has a lower tariff percentage or use false company names. Another tactic officials watch for is shipping the product through another country before it gets to the U. S. (referred to as trans-shipping).

Chinese crawfish may also reach the U. S. in different product forms. The tariff applies to peeled tail meat only. Since the tariff was implemented, there has been a rise in imports of whole crawfish cooked in Cajun seasonings. Although the full impact of this product is still to be felt, some processors have reported lost sales of similar products to east coast buyers.

This victory was accomplished because of the efforts of many individuals and financial assistance from the Louisiana State Legislature. Louisiana processors, farmers, extension agents and Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry personnel spent many hours educating government officials about the impact on the industry. The Louisiana Legislature appropriated approximately $450,000 for legal fees. The Louisiana Crawfish Processors Alliance still owes outstanding legal fees associated with their early efforts before the Legislature's appropriations.

Source: Crawfishnews. December, 1997. Jimmy Avery. LSU Agricultural Center, Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service.

ALGIERS LOCKS PARTIALLY CLOSED

The U. S. Coast Guard has announced that until approximately September, 1998, the Algiers Locks will be closed to navigation from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. The closure is to allow the construction of a new river end guidewall.

ATCHAFALAYA BASIN MAP

The Louisiana State Land Office has just released its brand new map of the Atchafalaya Basin showing all state lands within the area. The Basin receives heavy use from hunters, recreational fishermen, and commercial crawfish fishermen. What is public land and what is private land has been very confusing. This beautiful map makes the location of state lands very clear. The map costs $40 and may be ordered from State Land Office. P.O. Box 44124, Baton Rouge, La. 70804. Request the "Atchafalaya Basin Lands Map." Make checks out to "State of Louisiana."

1998 COASTAL STEWARDSHIP AWARDS

The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana is now accepting nominations for the third annual Coastal Stewardship Awards. These awards are given in recognition of outstanding contributions to restore and preserve Louisiana's coast.

Competition is limited to eight categories: Citizen Advocate (Adult), Citizen Advocate (Youth), Professional, Media, Educator, Organization, Distinguished Achievement, and Director. Each nomination must contain a nomination form, a letter stating the nominee's specific contributions, and documentation of those contributions. All entries must be received by February 1, 1998.

For more information or to get a nomination form, call Dina Boucher in Baton Rouge at 344-6555 or toll free at 1-888-LA-COAST.

Sincerely,

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

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