

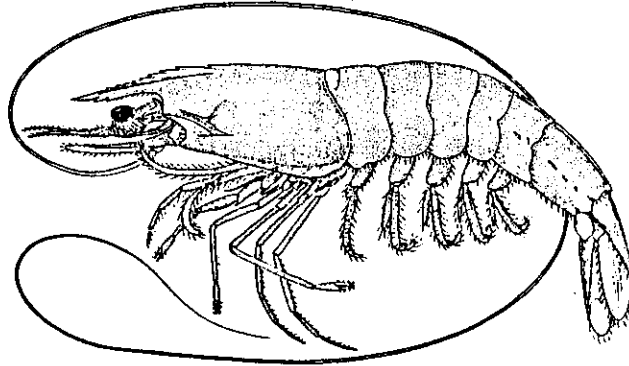


Louisiana State University  
**Agricultural Center**  
Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service

December 4, 1995  
Volume 19, No.12

**Jefferson Parish Office**  
1855 Ames Blvd.  
Marrero, LA 70072  
(504) 349-5644  
Fax: (504) 349-8817

## SEA GRANT PROGRAM



### LAGNIAPPE

#### LOUISIANA BYCATCH RESEARCH

Bycatch of the shrimp fishery in Louisiana consists mostly of unsalable finfish and shellfish. Some estimates place bycatch as high as five pounds for every pound of shrimp which is captured. No one disputes that bycatch in the shrimp fishery occurs. The question is whether it is having any biological effect on the population of fish and shellfish being caught.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fishery has since 1967 sampled the population of marsh finfish and shellfish to determine upward or downward population trends. Five species were chosen as indicator species to monitor fisheries populations. The five were the bay anchovy (a common and important food for other fish), the speckled trout, the sand seatrout (white trout), the gulf menhaden and the blue crab. Most of the blue crabs sampled were juvenile or young.

All of these species showed major increases and decreases from year to year. This is normal for estuarine species with a short life span and high reproductive ability. However, none of the species showed a longterm decline in abundance over the 28 year study.

The longterm trend on speckled trout was about level, with maybe a slight increase in population. Bay anchovies and white trout showed strong increases in numbers and gulf menhaden showed moderate increases. Even young blue crabs showed an increase in numbers in spite of the fact that some people feel that harvestable size crab numbers are down.

This research shows that while large numbers of estuarine finfish and shellfish are taken by shrimp fishermen, there has not been a downward trend with most of these species. The research agrees with earlier work done in Louisiana (1956) and more recent research in South Carolina.

Because shrimping shows little biological effect on inshore fisheries populations does not mean it is not a real or perceived sociological or political problem. Most people feel that the shrimp fishing industry will play a major part in changing the bycatch situation.

Source: Bycatch in the Shrimp Fishery of Louisiana, by W. Perret, P. Bowman and L.Savoie. Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

### **SPORTFISHING BYCATCH?**

The U. S. Congress is in the process of reauthorizing the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act. This is the act under which the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council functions. One of the provisions of the House version to reauthorize the act is for management to minimize old bycatch. This includes all recreational and commercial fish caught but not kept.

The American Sportfishing Association feels that this may strongly impact catch-and release fishing and is urging in exemption for fish which are caught and released in a recreational fishery.

Source: ASA Bulletin, No 458. October 1995.

### **CRAB TASK FORCE TACKLES TRAP PROBLEMS**

Because of concerns voiced by Louisiana fishermen, the 1995 state legislature directed that the Crab and the Shrimp Task Forces study the problem of lost or abandoned crab traps and make recommendations. These traps, called ghost traps, present a problem because they continue to catch crabs after being lost and they cause serious tangles in shrimp trawls when they catch them.

Most traps are lost when someone's boat propeller cuts the buoy line or when a storm rolls the trap and line into a ball. When shrimpers caught a ghost trap they used to bring it in and discard it. Now, regulations on tagging of traps prevents a shrimper or anyone else from possessing a crab trap with someone else's tag on it or without a tag on it. Throwing the trap back in the water may be illegal due to MARPOL pollution regulations and would certainly cause a problem to the next trawler that catches it.

At its November meeting, the Crab Task Force suggested several solutions. One would be to require more durable floats and lines on crab traps. Another was to legally define what a ghost trap is and allow shrimpers to possess them to bring them in to a designated dump site.

The crab Task Force has eleven members and is made up of fishermen and crab dealers. The Shrimp Task Force has not addressed this issue yet.

### **RED SNAPPER I.T.Q. PLAN**

A final rule was filed at the end of November which puts in place a red snapper Individual Transferrable Quota (ITQ) system.

The final rule: (1) establishes a limited entry program for the commercial red snapper fishery consisting of percentage shares of the annual commercial quota, which equate to an ITQ based on each participant's share; (2) provides for harvest under the ITQ system for 4 years, during which time the Council and NMFS will monitor and evaluate the program and decide whether to extend, terminate, or modify it; (3) specifies the procedure for the initial distribution of percentage shares of the red snapper quota; (4) defines eligibility criteria for initial red snapper ITQ allocations; (5) establishes provisions for transfer of landings records; and (6) creates a special appeals board, appointed by the Council, that would consider written requests from persons who contest their allocations of shares or determinations of historical captain status.

### **LIMITED ENTRY NEWS ELSEWHERE**

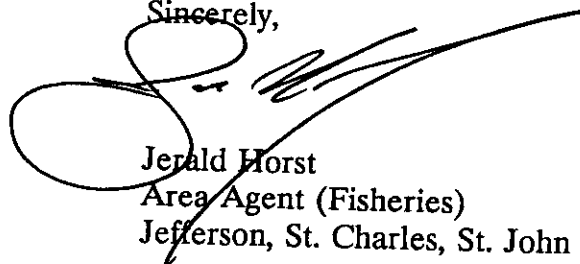
The Texas commercial bay shrimper limited entry program is well under development. The appeals process has been completed and about 2500 fishermen have qualified for licenses. This number is expected to go down as people who want to get out of the fishery will be able to sell their licenses back to a shrimp industry-funded buy-back program.

Also, Alabama is in the process of planning a limited entry program for their commercial crab fishery. Louisiana has a moratorium on new crab gear license sales for 1996 and 1997.

### **NEW PUBLICATION AVAILABLE**

I have just received a supply of the publication "Defining Fisheries: A Users Glossary." This booklet gives definitions for all of the technical biological and economic terms found in fishery management plans today. If you read any of these plans, this booklet will be most useful. Call or write my office in Marrero if you would like a copy.

Sincerely,



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