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## **SEA GRANT PROGRAM**

### **LAGNIAPPE**

#### **D. W. F. SECRETARY SPEAKS TO SHRIMPERS**

At the Louisiana Shrimp Association Annual Convention on February 2, new Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Secretary Jimmy Jenkins addressed the audience. Jenkins appointment has been viewed with apprehension by some commercial fishermen. This was because of his role as president of the Gulf Coast Conservation Association during its recent battle with netters over the use of gill nets.

In Jenkins opening comments he stated that "some people don't understand the difference between gill nets and shrimp trawls. I do. I am not an adversary of the shrimp industry. Our first job is to take care of the shrimp resource. Other than that we will try to help the shrimp industry."

Jenkins went on to state that "One of my objectives is to do more in the enforcement area, not just shrimp enforcement, but enforcement in general." He admitted that he does not have biological training but that he does have a good background as a businessman. With this background he stated that he plans to reorganize and reprioritize the department. He also wants to stabilize the department's funding. He further stated that he "can recognize a goldbrick instantly."

Jenkins closed his comments by stating that the department "does have a lot of good people, but we have to get them headed in the right direction," and answered questions about redfish predation on shrimp, and on finfish bycatch reduction devices.

#### **SHRIMP MARKETS ON ALERT**

*Shrimp prices and supplies have in recent years, been more and more influenced by imports. In fact, 81% of the shrimp consumed in this country are imported. Last*

month, the U. S. Court of International Trade issued an interim order that may temporarily affect the supply of shrimp imports.

In 1989, during the TED controversy, the U. S. Congress passed a law that required that countries that export shrimp to the U. S. have TED regulations like those required for U. S. Shrimpers. Wild caught shrimp from countries without TED regulations to protect turtles were to have their shrimp embargoed or prevented from coming into the United States. As the law was first interpreted, it was only applied to 14 countries in the Caribbean.

The Earth Island Institute and other environmental groups disagreed and sued. The court agreed with them and applied the law to virtually all the countries of the world that supply wild-caught shrimp to the U. S. This is effective May 1, 1996.

Since it will be difficult for many countries to develop a TED program in just a few months, the supply of shrimp to the U. S. may be reduced. This could possibly cause a price increase on shrimp from the fishermen to the consumer, including all the dealers and processors in between.

No one really knows yet how seriously the supply will be reduced. Half of the shrimp imported are farmed and 13 of the 14 Caribbean countries, already meet the TED requirements.

## **CONFERENCE ON GULF HYPOXIC ZONE**

In December the Gulf of Mexico program sponsored a conference to discuss the large hypoxic zone (or "dead zone" as the press calls it) in the gulf. Both Paul Coreil, our wetlands specialist, and I attended it. Below are some of the key points discussed at the conference:

- 1) The northern Gulf of Mexico hypoxia is one of the largest zones of oxygen-poor bottom waters in the western Atlantic Ocean.
- 2) Many researchers feel that the oxygen deficit is due to the death and decay of large phytoplankton (microscopic plant) growths caused by large amounts of nutrients coming down the Mississippi River. The main nutrients are phosphorus and nitrogen.
- 3) According to the U. S. Geological Survey (USGS), nonpoint sources of pollution are responsible for 90% of the nitrogen and 75% of the phosphorous in the river. Nonpoint source pollution is any pollution that does not come from one particular spot like a factory or sewage discharge but rather from many small sources.

- 4) Of all of the nitrogen entering the Mississippi River, 70% comes from upstream sources and 23% comes from lower stream sources.
- 5) The highest nitrogen contributing states include Iowa, Missouri, Illinois, and Minnesota.
- 6) Sources of nitrogen in the Mississippi River identified by USGS include atmospheric deposition (caused naturally by lightning and rain), fertilizer and animal manure.
- 7) Even though nutrient loads in the Mississippi contribute to the formation and size of the hypoxic zone in the Gulf, these same nutrients are vital to maintaining the productivity of Gulf fisheries.
- 8) There is a general lack of data on the impact of expanding Gulf hypoxia on Gulf fisheries. Possible impacts include altered coastal phytoplankton-based food chains, undesirable algae growths, altered bottom ecosystems, and both direct and indirect impacts on fisheries such as higher death rates and changes in mortality.
- 9) The agriculture industry has made great strides in nutrient runoff reduction through the continued development and implementation of cost-effective Best Management Practices (BMPs) nationwide.

### **SHRIMP BYCATCH RULES IN ATLANTIC COMING**

The South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council will be holding public hearings on a shrimp management plan amendment that will require the use of Bycatch Reduction Devices (BRDs) in shrimp trawls. This council manages the federal waters of the Atlantic Coast States of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

The proposed rule would require the use of BRDs in all shrimp nets with a mesh size of under 2 1/2 inches stretches and that are over 15 feet in size. Approved BRDs for their waters presently are the fish eye, extended funnel and large mesh.

While the Gulf Council which manages our waters does not have a formal proposal on BRD regulations yet, one may come in the near future.

### **EAT NUTRIA -- SAVE A MARSH**

Since the decline of the fur trapping industry, the state's nutria population has been uncontrolled, causing increasing damage to our fragile coastal marshes. In an effort to control their populations and also find a use for them, some people have proposed that we eat them. Bob Thomas of the Louisiana Nature and Science Center even developed a nutria-fest to promote them for human consumption.

Nutria is much like rabbit in taste and texture. Millions of pounds are already eaten in Europe. The Louisiana Fur and Alligator Advisory Council funded research on the nutritional value of nutria by the Pennington Biomedical Research Center in Baton Rouge. The table below shows the results of their research.

	Nutria (raw)	Chicken meat (raw)	Turkey meat (raw)	26% fat ground beef (raw)	Atlantic cod (raw)	Squirrel (raw)	Deer (raw)	Wild rabbit (raw)
Protein g/100 g	22.2	21.39	21.8	16.6	17.8	21.2	23	21.8
Fat g/100 g	1	3.1	2.9	26.6	.7	3.2	2.4	2.3
Carbohy- drate rate g/100 g	.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Choles- terol mg/100 g	31.7	70	65	85	43	83	85	81

Three agencies working together, the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (DWF), the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH), and Department of Agriculture and Forestry (DAF) have developed rules and regulations for the commercial harvest and processing of nutria for human consumption. DHH will license nutria processing facilities and DAF has developed processing rules and will be responsible for inspection. Harvest will be licensed and controlled by DWF and will take place only during open trapping season which runs until March 20 this year.

Anyone interested in more information on nutria harvest and processing may contact Noel Kinler with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries at (318) 373-0032.

## FOREIGN OYSTER EXPERIMENTS

Virginia scientists are asking the state to allow them to experiment with planting foreign oysters in the Chesapeake Bay, where nearly all the native oysters have been wiped out by disease. Chesapeake Bay oysters are presently the same species as Louisiana oysters and compete with them in the market place.

In the past, this research has been opposed by the state of Maryland, which is also on the Chesapeake Bay, and by environmental groups which fear that the foreign oysters would crowd out the few remaining native oysters. This has happened in the past where foreign species such as water hyacinth (lillies) hydrilla water grass, nutria, and zebra mussel populations have exploded and taken over habitat when they were introduced.

Disease introduction is also a possibility. When our native red swamp crawfish was introduced into Europe it brought diseases that wiped out their native crawfish.

The introduction of foreign oysters has been a big success on the west coast, however. The state of Washington is now the second largest producer of oysters in the United States and almost all of their production is the foreign Pacific oyster.

The Virginia experiments will be part of a four-year project to determine which of four species of Asian oysters would produce the best growth and reproduction and would resist native diseases best.

In 1993, scientists put 250 Japanese oysters in the New York River. The oysters were sterilized so that they wouldn't spawn. They did not grow very well, but did resist the diseases that killed native oysters. The oysters were removed when it was found out that some of them were no longer sterile and research was stopped.

SOURCE: Waterman's Gazette, January 1996.

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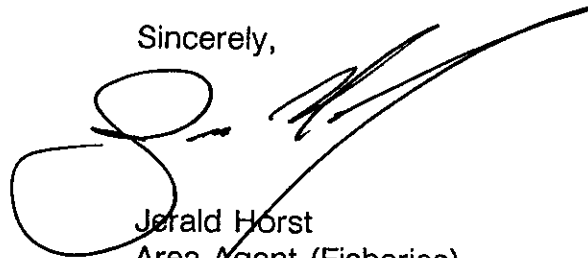
### THE GUMBO POT Shrimp au Gratin

3/4 lb. cooked shrimp  
3 tbsp chopped onion  
3 tbsp butter, melted  
1/4 cup flour  
1/2 tsp salt  
1/4 tsp dry mustard

dash of pepper  
1 1/2 cups milk  
1 cup grated velveeta type cheese  
1 tbsp butter melted  
1/4 cup dry bread crumbs

Cut large shrimp in half. Cook onion in butter until tender; blend in flour and seasonings. Add milk gradually and cook until thick, stirring constantly. Add 3/4 cup of cheese and heat till melted. Stir in shrimp and pour into well-greased casserole. Combine butter, crumbs and remaining cheese: sprinkle over top of casserole. Bake in 400 degree oven for 10 minutes or until brown. Serves 6.

Sincerely,



Jerald Horst  
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Jefferson, St. Charles, St. John