



Louisiana State University

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### **SEA GRANT PROGRAM**



### **LAGNIAPPE**

#### **MORATORIUM ON CHARTERBOATS CONSIDERED**

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is considering a temporary moratorium on issuing new charter boat/headboat permits to fish in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Presently, 1,286 charterboats and 91 headboats operate from the five Gulf states.

The permits under consideration are reef fish permits, under which snappers and groupers are taken, and coastal migratory pelagic permits, which allow mackerel harvest.

The council is considering a 3-year moratorium under which all persons holding these permits on September 16, 1999 will be eligible to keep them. Under the proposal, transfer of permits would be allowed between vessels owned by the permit holder and between individuals without the transfer of the vessel. Permits not renewed or those revoked for violations would not be re-issued during the moratorium.

The council did not select a preferred option for vessel size restrictions on permit transfers, the appeals process during the moratorium, and vessel reporting requirements.

The Louisiana public hearing on the moratorium proposal will be held at 7 p.m. on Thursday, December 9 at the Larose Regional Park, 2001 East 5<sup>th</sup> Street in Larose, LA.

## BLUE CRAB SITUATION

The blue crab provides one of the more valuable commercial fisheries in Louisiana. Although North Carolina now leads the nation in commercial blue crab landings, Louisiana held that position for many years. Louisiana still ranks a solid second in landings.

Although these numbers are impressive, a big change may be on the horizon for the crab industry. The driving force behind these expected changes is crabmeat imports from Asia and Latin America. From 1995 to 1998, the number of companies producing crabmeat in Louisiana has fallen from 33 to 21. Nationally, the number has fallen from 147 to 112.

Currently, Alabama crabmeat plants are picking up the slack for Louisiana crabbers by processing large amounts of Louisiana-produced crabs. In fact, Alabama processors are processing 3 to 4 times as many crabs as are caught in their state. If Alabama processors reduce their purchases of whole crabs or if some Alabama processors leave the business as Louisiana ones have, Louisiana crab fishermen may have difficulty in marketing their crabs. The Louisiana basket market and the export markets for female crabs to the Orient and large males to the Atlantic Coast are unlikely to use many more crabs.

State	1998 Landings (lbs)
North Carolina	62,075,057
Louisiana	43,656,898
Virginia	34,599,284
Maryland	30,870,447
Florida	17,162,638
South Carolina	7,595,874
Texas	6,981,424
New Jersey	5,829,331
Georgia	5,095,100
Delaware	4,359,822
Alabama	3,478,259
New York	1,538,285
Mississippi	593,182
Connecticut	2,144

Market Volume and Market Share  
(In 1,000 lbs.)

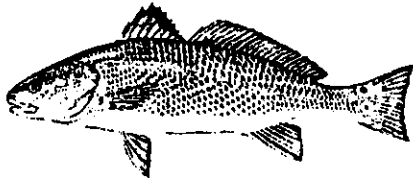
Year	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Domestic Industry	18,170	18,600	13,866	13,241	12,456	9,235
Imports	13,382	14,418	17,183	15,631	18,794	26,427
TOTAL	31,552	33,019	31,049	28,872	31,250	35,662
Domestic Industry's Market Share	57.6%	56.3%	44.7%	45.9%	39.9%	25.9%

The table on the previous page explains what is happening. United States crabmeat production has steadily declined since 1993 and the volume of imports has steadily increased. These imports are heaviest from Thailand and Indonesia, followed by Mexico, Venezuela, Malaysia and several other countries. The U.S.-produced share of crabmeat consumed in the United States has slid from over 57% to under 26% in six years and may likely drop lower.

Currently, a loosely-organized group of U.S. crabmeat processors, under leadership from the Atlantic Coast states, is seeking restrictions on imports. The results of this effort will be of interest to everyone in the commercial crab fishery.

### FEDERAL REDFISH STOCK ASSESSMENT

The results of the long-awaited federal stock assessment on redfish are now out and--it doesn't say anything--in 118 pages. The field work for the stock assessment was completed in the summer of 1998 when federal researchers sampled with purse seines to recapture some of the 9,669 adult redfish tagged and released the previous year between Mobile, Alabama and Galveston, Texas.



Redfish were declared an overfished species during the run-up in commercial (and recreational) fishery landings in the mid-1980's. In 1987 all harvest of redfish was prohibited in federal waters. By 1988, Louisiana had closed all commercial harvest and drastically limited recreational harvest.

From 1992 through 1997, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries was required by state law to provide an annual stock assessment report on Louisiana redfish to the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission. These reports consistently indicated that Louisiana's rate of escapement of young fish to offshore spawning stocks was well above the 30% minimum requested by the feds. In fact, it was estimated to be a minimum of 51% in 1997.

The biological health of the redfish stock is measured by its spawning potential ratio (SPR). This measure compares the egg-producing ability of the female fish in a fished stock as compared to what the estimated ability would be in an unfished stock. Louisiana's estimated SPR has consistently been well above the conservation standard for redfish.

Those figures indicate that the Louisiana harvest of redfish could be safely increased. Florida, the second largest redfish-producing state, also has similarly high SPR's and escapement rates. In spite of this, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has presented a gloomy view. A 1996 NMFS stock assessment report, which was

mostly a rehashing of their old data, produced an SPR figure slightly over 10%, well below the 20% conservation standard.

The 1997-1998 tag and recapture program conducted by NMFS, the first since 1986-87, was supposed to produce new data for a new assessment. It didn't. The report concluded ".....the results of this assessment must be regarded as uncertain. Indeed, seemingly minor changes in the way the recent selectivity is estimated can cause the appraisal to change from very pessimistic to very optimistic. On the surface this might seem to be a modeling problem, but it is actually a reflection of the uncertainty of the data."

After all the work and 10 years of waiting, the result is that the scientists on the Gulf Council's Red Drum Stock Assessment Panel decided on October 27 that they could make no recommendation. Instead, they suggested holding a special workshop in February to examine other data needed for an assessment and to make more complex computer analyses. The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee didn't review the Stock Assessment Panel's recommendations because there were none, and the Red Drum Advisory Panel, comprised of citizen fisheries advisors, had their meeting canceled. What will happen remains to be seen.

## **NEW FEDERAL FISH LIMITS**

The National Marine Fisheries Service has announced new rules effective immediately, for some jacks and reef fish. They are as follows:

- A 1-fish per vessel recreational limit for warsaw grouper.
- A 1-fish per vessel recreational limit for speckled hind.
- A 16-inch minimum size (total length) for scamp grouper
- A 16-inch minimum size (total length) for mutton snapper.
- A 12-inch minimum size (total length) for gray triggerfish.
- A 12-inch minimum size (total length) for cubera, schoolmaster, dog and mahogany snappers.
- A 12-inch minimum size (fork length) and a 5-fish bag limit for hogfish.
- A minimum size of 14 inches and a maximum size of 22 inches (fork length), for lesser amberjack and banded rudderfish, and a combined 5-fish recreational limit for both fish.
- Lesser amberjack, banded rudderfish, hogfish, sand perch, dwarf sand perch, and queen snapper are removed from the species harvested under the 20-fish aggregate reef fish bag limit.

## I THINK I LOST MY APPETITE

Last month, *Time* magazine issued a special *Beyond 2000* issue that was supposed to answer important questions for the new century on human health and the environment. The issue had a section on the future of fisheries and another on the future of animal agriculture. For those of you that don't receive this national news magazine, I excerpted some quotes from each article. The quotes directly reflect the tone of each article.

The title of the fisheries article was **What Will Be The Catch of the Day?**

- *"If we continue, at our present rate, to strip-mine the sea of its living resources, 25 years from now we'll be lucky to find a seafood menu that offers a rock sandwich with a side order of kelp."*
- *"But they're (swordfish) hardly the only victims of the current global lunacy, of which the motto seems to be: if it swims, hook it, stab it, poison it or blow it up."*
- *"Modern technology has given us the tools to extinguish entire fish populations, and because man is a can-do critter, that's what we're doing."*
- *"Daily, weapons of mass destruction are deployed in seas the world over: long lines spanning up to 80 miles, dangling scores of thousands of baited hooks; enormous nets, nearly invisible in water."*
- *"The seas make up 95% of the planet's biosphere--the realm where all living things exist--and we are stripping and poisoning it, depriving it of its ability to sustain life."*
- *"Have we slipped, silently and unaware, into our death spiral?"*
- *"More and more nations are establishing marine reserves, where sea creatures of all sorts and sizes can mate and bear their young free from the menace of man."*
- *"Where fishing in the wild has been banned outright, fish stocks are starting to come back."*
- *"Soon some oysters may be as rare and costly as pearls."*

The fisheries article was closed followed by one titled **Will We Still Eat Meat?**

- *"Much as we have awakened to the full economic and social costs of cigarettes, we will find we can no longer subsidize or ignore the costs of mass-producing cattle, poultry, pigs, sheep and fish to feed our growing population."*
- *"Mass production of meat has also become a staggering source of pollution."*
- *"Pass up one hamburger, and you'll save as much water as you save by taking 40 showers with a low-flow nozzle."*
- *"In the U.S., livestock now produce 130 times as much waste as people do."*
- *"Agriculture is the world's biggest cause of deforestation, and increasing demand for meat is the biggest force in the expansion of agriculture."*
- *"In the long run, we can lose our memory of eating animals, and we will discover the intrinsic satisfactions of a diverse plant-based diet, as millions of people already have."*
- *"Decades from now, cattle will still be raised, perhaps in patches of natural rangeland, for people inclined to eat and able to afford a porterhouse, while others will make exceptions in ceremonial meals on special days like Thanksgiving, which link us ritually to our evolutionary and cultural past. But the era of mass-produced animal flesh, and its unsustainable costs to human and environmental health, should be over before the next century is out."*

These two articles were closely followed by an article called **What's For Dinner?** Here *Time* magazine asked a New York City vegetarian chef to prepare a dinner menu "that would be good for the body - - and the planet." The menu:

#### Appetizer

Pate of lentils with toasted walnuts and bay leaves on endives.

#### Soup and Salad

Chick-pea miso soup with salad of organic baby greens, heirloom tomatoes and toasted soy nuts.

#### Entree

Seared tofu cutlets in an orange chipotle glaze with mushrooms, butternut squash and wheatberries.

#### Desert

Sundae of rice "ice cream," sliced bananas and carmelized cane sugar.

*Time* stated "If the future can be made this appetizing, even a T-bone palate could learn to be happy in a tofu world." Have you ever tasted lentils, chick peas, miso soup, soynuts, tofu, wheatberries and rice "ice cream"?

What was disturbing to me was who this respected news magazine chose to write these articles. The author of the fisheries article was not one of the thousands of professional scientists that have devoted their lives to fisheries research and management. It was a fiction writer, Peter Benchley, who wrote the novel *Jaws* that scared it wits out of people and spurred a national shark-killing spree. The author of the animal agriculture article was not an agricultural scientist or even a nutritional researcher, but Ed Ayres of the Worldwatch Institute, an environmental activist organization.

Source: *Time*, November 8, 1999.

## LOUISIANA AND TEXAS CHANGE RECIPROCAL FISHING LICENSE AGREEMENT

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and Texas Parks and Wildlife have implemented a change in the reciprocal fishing license agreement between the two states for inland and common boundary waters. This change took effect October 1, 1999 and applies only to the senior citizen exemptions of the reciprocal agreement for boundary waters south of the line between Texas Point and Louisiana Point.

The former agreement provided for Louisiana residents over the age of 60 and Texas residents over the age of 65 to fish boundary waters of each state without a license. As of October 1, 1999 Louisiana residents 16 and older and Texas residents 17 and older, including senior citizens are required to purchase non-resident recreational fishing licenses when fishing outside their state of residence below the line between Texas Point and Louisiana Point. In all common boundary waters above the line the terms of the former agreement remain intact.

The reciprocal fishing license agreement was originally finalized a year ago and applies only to sport fishing in inland and common boundary waters. It does not apply to any fishing activity that requires a specific recreational gear license in either state, such as use of crab traps, crawfish traps, or to coastal waters. Other than license privileges, an angler must follow all regulations for the state in which he is fishing.

## TOURNAMENT BASS MORTALITY

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has finished the first of six monitoring studies of mortality (death) rates of bass caught by bass tournament fishermen at Lake Fork, Texas. During this tournament,



each two-person fishing team was allowed to keep 5 bass measuring 14 inches and longer and were allowed to cull their catches throughout the day.

The biologists monitored immediate and delayed mortality of several test groups of bass -- fish caught and immediately released; fish which were caught, held in live wells and released (culled) later in the day when a larger fish was caught; and fish brought to weigh-in at the end of the fishing day. These mortality rates were compared to bass that the biologists collected by electrofishing (shocking). All the bass were marked and held in 4 large holding nets for 6 days following the tournament.

The results were not too far off from what the biologists expected. The bass taken by electrofishing and held for comparison with hook-caught fish suffered a 3.7% mortality rate. Those caught and released immediately had 1.3% mortality, bass caught, held and culled had 14.9% mortality, and fish brought to weigh-in had 39.1% mortality. The researcher in charge drew no immediate conclusions as this is the first of 6 tournaments to be monitored, but stated that bass mortality due to tournaments can be much higher than many fishermen believe.

Source: *Texas Parks and Wildlife News Release, October 25, 1999*

## **COMMISSION PROPOSES CRAB TRAP FLOAT RULES**

The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission has issued a notice of intent on November 4 to change the rules regulating the marking of crab traps. Act 422 of the 1999 Louisiana legislature requires that any shrimper who catches in his net a serviceable crab trap without a float must return the trap to the water with a "common float" attached. The act also requires the commission to set guidelines for these common floats. The proposed rule defines a common float as an all white, plastic, one-gallon bleach bottle. Any crab trap marked with a common float may be checked for ownership by any crabber. The proposed rule also requires all other crab traps to be marked with a solid float with a diameter of at least 6 inches using a non-floating line of at least ¼-inch in diameter.

Interested persons may submit written comments of the proposed rule to Mark Schexnayder, Crustacean Programs Manager, Marine Fisheries Division, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, P.O. Box 98000, Baton Rouge, LA 70898 by 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, January 5, 2000.

## **SEAFOOD STANDARDS TASK FORCE MEETS**

The Seafood Standards of Identity Task Force, created by the Louisiana Legislature during its 1999 session, met for the first time on November 3 in Baton Rouge. The 16 voting members are comprised of 13 seafood dealer/processor representatives, 2



restauranters and the Executive Director of the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board. Seven nonvoting technical advisors were also appointed to the group.

The task force was charged with the responsibility to identify seafood products which lack standards, have outdated standards, or have conflicting standards of identity, and to make recommendations to the legislature or appropriate state agencies for more uniform standards of identity to enhance the marketability of Louisiana seafood products and lessen buyer confusion.

At their first meeting, the voting members agreed that it was important to notify other seafood-related businesses of the existence of task force. They expressed interest in hearing from other people who buy and sell seafood about issues or problems that the task force should address.

Voting member's names and telephone numbers are as follows:

- Preston Battistella, Battistella's Seafood, Inc. 504/949-2724
- Greg Benhard, Louisiana Premium Seafoods, Inc. 337/623-4294
- Catherine Blades, LA Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board 504/568-5693
- Frank Brigtsen, Brigtsen's Restaurant 504/861-7610
- Gerald Champagne, Southeast Crab Co. of Louisiana 504/868-4193
- William Chauvin, American Shrimp Processors Association 504/368-1571
- Greg Giamanco, Giamanco's Restaurant 225/928-5046
- Carl Haring, Haring's Pride Catfish 318/724-6133
- Daniel Lafont, Hubert Lafont Shrimp Co. 504/ 475-5138
- Roy Meeks, Meek's Seafood Co. 504/693-7992
- Harlon Pearce, Harlon's LA Fish, LLC. 504/467-3809
- Jim Rich, Catfish Wholesale, Inc. 337/643-6700
- Bobby Samanie, Samanie Packing Co., Inc. 504/563-2348
- Nick Vinterella, Carlo's Oyster, Inc. 504/748-5493
- Wilson Voisin, Wilson's Oysters, Inc. 504/857-8855
- Robbie Walker, Louisiana Seafood Exchange 225/756-5225

Nonvoting technical advisor's names and telephone numbers are listed below:

- Ken Roberts, (Chairman) Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service 225/388-2152
- David Guilbeau, Louisiana Office of Public Health 225/763-5467
- Ronnie Harrell, Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry 225/925-3780
- Jerald Horst, Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service 504/349-5644
- David Lavergne, Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries 225/765-2605
- Jeff Mayne, Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries 225/765-2980
- Mike Moody, Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service 225/388-2152

The task force has set its next meeting at Efferson Hall, LSU campus, in Baton Rouge for 1:30 p.m. on December 14, 1999. Subsequent meetings are scheduled for the second Tuesday of each month at the same time and place.

### **NET BAN FAILS AGAIN IN WASHINGTON STATE**

An initiative to eliminate the use of 18 types of commercial fishing gear in fresh and marine waters of Washington state failed again for the second time in 4 years. If the initiative had passed, only Native American Indians could have used the gear because of their protection under tribal treaty.

Sports fishermen and some environmental groups favored the initiative, stating that banning commercial gear would be the quickest way to save salmon while also bringing in more sport fishing and tourism dollars, as well as boosting local economies. Initiative opponents included commercial fishermen and other environmental groups. The measure, they said, was a fish grab that would simply provide sports fishermen and Indians with more salmon to catch, while diverting efforts away from more positive salmon restoration efforts, such as restoring habitat.

The initiative failed by public vote in 34 of the state's 39 counties. The initiative's sponsor, Tom Nelson said that he's throwing in the towel and getting out of politics. He said he plans to sell his boat and head to Ireland for several weeks.

Source: *Seattle Times Newspaper*, November 3, 1999.

### **CHRISTMAS TREE PROJECT VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

Volunteers and boats are once again needed for the Jefferson Parish Christmas Tree/Marsh Restoration Project. This marsh restoration project, now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year, uses donated Christmas trees to build sediment-trapping fences that protect and restore wetlands in the Barataria Basin.

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

January 15, 1999 (January 16, 2000)  
January 22, 1999 (January 23, 2000)  
January 29, 1999 (January 30, 2000)  
February 5, 1999 (February 6, 2000)