

Lagniappe



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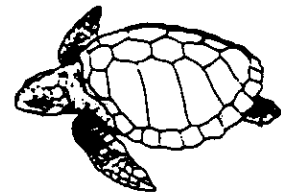
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To change your subscription to e-mail, simply send a message requesting the change to jhorst@agctr.lsu.edu. IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO INCLUDE THE FULL NAME AND MAILING ADDRESS FROM YOUR CURRENT PAPER SUBSCRIPTION IN YOUR MESSAGE. New electronic subscribers are also welcome and should also contact us at the e-mail address above and must include their parish of residence.

KEMP'S RIDLEY SEA TURTLE NEST COUNT

After setting a modern record for numbers of nests on Mexican beaches in 2002, the number of Kemp's ridley sea turtle nests made a big 29% jump in 2003. Although some Kemp's ridley females nest two years in a row, the majority of them nest every other year, producing 2 to 3 nests during the season. Each nest contains a hundred or so eggs that require from 42 to 62 days incubation, depending on the temperature in the nest. Females come onto the beaches to dig their nests between 5:30 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. This species of turtle nests almost exclusively on Mexican beaches, with the largest concentration being at Rancho Nuevo. The number of hatchlings (baby turtles) produced has increased from a low of 32,921 in 1983 to 476,138 in 2003.



<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NO. OF NESTS</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NO. OF NESTS</u>
1978	924	1991	1178
1979	954	1992	1275
1980	868	1993	1241
1981	897	1994	1562
1982	750	1995	1930
1983	746	1996	2080
1984	798	1997	2387
1985	702	1998	3845
1986	744	1999	3640
1987	737	2000	6277
1988	842	2001	5442
1989	888	2002	6436
1990	992	2003	8323

In 1974, an estimated 40,000 Kemp's ridleys arrived in one mass nesting event. By the mid-1980s, nest numbers had declined to 702. The turtle's decline was primarily due to the collection of eggs on the beaches and the killing of the adults for meat and other products. Additional deaths were also caused by accidental catch in shrimp trawls. The decline in numbers of Kemp's ridley sea turtles brought on the mandatory use of TEDs in shrimp trawls in an effort to save it.

Sources: *Report on the Mexico/United States of America Population Restoration Project for the Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle, Lepidochelys kempij, on the Coasts of Tamaulipas and Veracruz, Mexico.* Gladys Porter Zoo. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2003.

COMMISSION SETS SPECKLED TROUT REGULATIONS

The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission has issued a declaration of emergency for southwestern Louisiana, limiting recreational fishermen to possession of no more than five speckled trout over 25 inches long. The 12-inch minimum size and 25 fish creel limit remain in place. The five specks allowed to be over 25 inches are part of the 25 fish limit.

The area affected by this regulation is south of Interstate 10 from its junction at the Texas-Louisiana boundary eastward to its junction with Louisiana Highway 171, south to Highway 14, and then south to Holmwood, and then south on Highway 27 through Gibbstown south to Louisiana Highway 82 at Creole and south on Highway 82 to Oak Grove, and then due south to the western shore of the Mermentau River, following this shoreline south to the junction with the Gulf of Mexico, and then due south to the limit of the state territorial sea. This includes outside state waters to the boundary with federal waters.

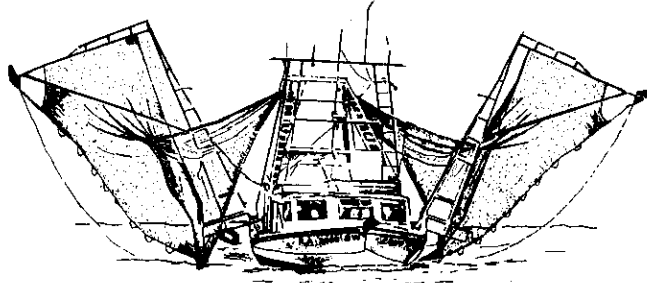
This emergency regulation is effective December 29, 2003 and is in effect for 120 days. During this period, the Commission may take action to make the regulation permanent, or they can modify it. At the Commission meeting in December, some Commission members stated that they wanted to introduce a notice of intent in January to apply the rule statewide. Part of the impetus for the regulation in the

Calcasieu/Sabine area seems to be concern about non-resident fishermen catching and keeping large numbers of big trout.

MESSAGE FOR SHRIMPERS

This year, the subject of focus at the International WorkBoat Show's Commercial Fisheries Seminars was options for shrimpers. To kick off the program, Jerry Fraser, editor and associate publisher of National Fisherman magazine was asked to give an outside view on whether the shrimp industry can survive. Before taking

his current position with the magazine, Fraser spent 25 years as a deckhand, skipper and boat owner in the New England groundfish fishery.



Fraser opened his comments by saying that no fishery in the U.S. is completely isolated. No matter where you look, you see commercial fishermen in trouble. He used the New England groundfish fishery as an example. The media paints the fishery as in disastrous shape, but the truth is that groundfish stocks have tripled. Yet, the government is still making harvest cuts. On top of this, commercial fishermen are attacking at each other. Seven different fishermen's groups exist and they are all telling elected officials opposite things. Fraser said that one of his themes with National Fisherman magazine is for fishermen to realize that they are not alone and for them to reach across boundaries and start communicating with each other.

Turning to the shrimp industry, Fraser reminded shrimpers of the saying, "This too shall pass". He added, "It may seem to some of you that there's no light at the end of the tunnel, that the life your fathers and grandfathers knew is changing forever. You will get by this problem because the resource is in good shape. The question is what the industry will look like. This scares everyone, not just in the shrimp fishery but also in any fishery in trouble."

One thing, he said, that the wild shrimp industry can do is position its product in the market place to compete with farm-raised imports. People are more concerned with health and are willing to pay more for wild products. The Alaskan salmon industry has shown that. Fraser said that he didn't know what would happen with the trade action against imports, but that he thought that the action was worth pursuing. He added that it isn't a magic wand. "There are lots of dollars involved. The guys with big money usually don't get hurt too bad, and the importers have the big money."

He said that he didn't think that the commercial fishing industry would ever return to the "good old days" when any person could just go buy a license and go fishing. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is determined to reduce the size of fishing fleets. Its not just NMFS, he said, developers are taking waterfront land and people are

moving to the shore that don't cherish traditions. Additionally, even if fish stocks are healthy, the conservation movement will continue to challenge the fishing industry on habitat. "It is crucial to recognize changes and you need to change before you are forced to change," Frazer stressed to the fishermen in the audiences.

Fraser went on about the challenge from environmentalists. "We cannot fight and win every battle. We must be part of the process. Fishermen can work with some conservation groups, but others are dogmatic — rooted in their principal. We need to be in the arena with them, using the process. If a train is coming, get on it rather than get run over by it."

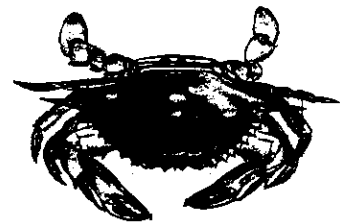
Going back to open access and limited entry, Fraser said, "In my heart, it is hard to reconcile myself to less fishermen, but I know its coming." He said that he was aware of the benefits from limited entry. In the Alaska halibut fishery, competition from so many boats existed that the season was down to only a couple of days a year. The fishery became so "frantic and dangerous" that in 1995, individual fishing quotas (IFQs) were put in place. Putting IFQs in place was very stressful; some people were shut out. Now, the season lasts over most of the year and prices are better. Everybody in the fishery now loves IFQs. But as a New Englander, Fraser said, limited entry and IFQs go against his grain. But, "I must temper emotion with reality. There is a lot of pressure, even from fishermen, to shrink fleets."

He closed by saying that the big issue is the still the number of commercial fishing groups fighting each other. "Politicians don't know who to believe. It is a lot easier for NMFS and conservationists to make their changes if the industry is divided."

Source: *Can the shrimp Industry Survive—Honest Answers*. Jerry Fraser. Commercial Fishing Seminars. LSU Sea Grant Extension Program and National Fisherman Magazine, International WorkBoat Show. December 5, 2003.

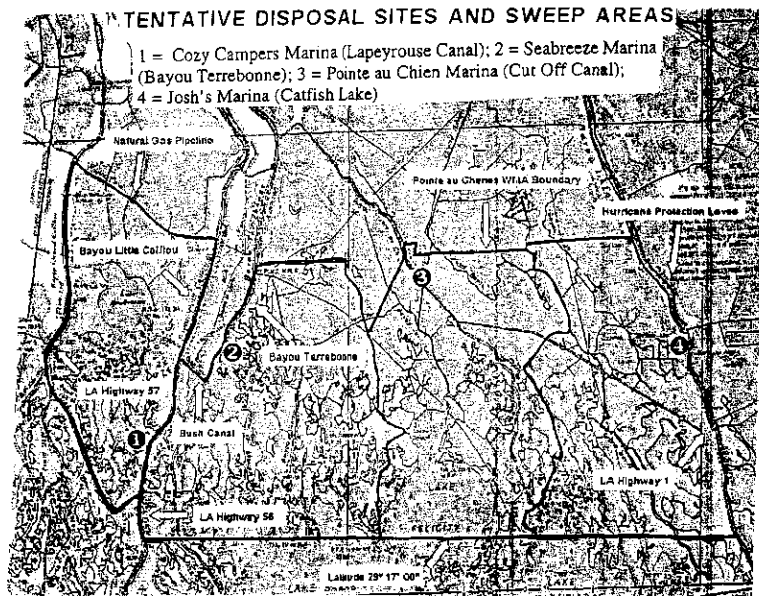
VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO CLEAN-UP DERELICT CRAB TRAPS

Blue crabs are one of Louisiana's true seafood delights and the modern commercial blue crab fishery couldn't compete with other states and countries without crab traps. Additionally, over half of all licenses for crab trap use are sold to recreational fishermen. However, 50 years of crab trap use have left areas of the coastline dotted with derelict or abandoned crab traps.



In a remarkable display of cooperation, the commercial crab industry through the Louisiana Crab Task Force, the Louisiana Wildlife Federation and the Coastal Conservation Association are working with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and other agencies to do a pilot clean-up project in a portion of Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes and **VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED!**

In the clean-up area, a closure on the use of crab traps will occur for 16 days, from 6 a.m., February 28 through 6 a.m. March 14. The closure area is in the part of Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes from a point originating from the southern boundary of the Pointe aux Chenes Wildlife Management Area at the South Lafourche Hurricane Protection Levee, then west along the southern boundary of the Pointe aux Chenes Wildlife Management Area to the Humble Canal, then west along the northern shore-



line of Humble Canal to its intersection with Bayou Terrebonne, then south along the western shoreline of Bayou Terrebonne to its intersection with Bush Canal, then west along the northern shore line of Bush Canal to its intersection with Bayou Little Caillou, then north along the eastern shoreline of Bayou Little Caillou to the Gulf South/South Coast Natural Gas Pipeline in Chauvin, the northwest along the Gulf South/South Coast Natural Gas Pipeline to LA Highway 57, then south and then southeast along LA Highway 57 to its intersection with LA Highway 56, then south along LA Highway 56 to latitude 29 degrees 17 minutes 00 seconds N, then east along latitude 29 degrees 17 minutes 00 seconds N to LA Highway 1, then north along LA Highway 1 to the South Lafourche Hurricane Protection Levee, then north along the South Lafourche Hurricane Protection Levee and ending at the southern boundary of the Pointe aux Chenes Wildlife Management Area.

All crab traps left in the area during the closure will be considered abandoned and can be removed during daylight hours by anyone and discarded at one of the four disposal sites. Although abandoned crab trap removal may occur all 16 days, volunteers are most heavily needed for February 28 and March 6. Both are Saturdays. If bad weather ruins one day, March 13 will be substituted.

All volunteers with boats are welcome — shrimpers, crabbers and recreational fishermen. Airboats are especially welcome. Anyone wishing to volunteer to do their share in keeping Louisiana's coast clean should contact Vince Guillory at 985/594-4139 or guillory_v@wlf.state.la.us.

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries personnel will be present at each disposal site on the main volunteer days to collect data and assist with the traps. Instruction sheets, maps, and volunteer gifts and supplies (tarps, trap hooks, and

gloves) will be distributed. More information on the program and detailed volunteer instructions can be found on the Internet at www.blue-crab.net/derelict.html.

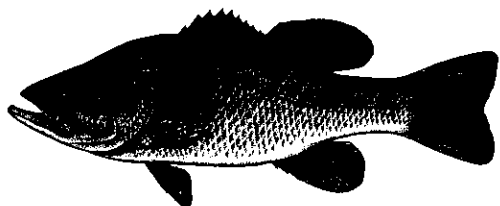
FOOD PROCESSORS CONFERENCE

The LSU AgCenter Department of Food Science and the Louisiana Department of Economic Development will be holding their second annual Louisiana Food Processors Conference on March 3 & 4 in Baton Rouge. The conference is of major interest to seafood processors. Topics to be discussed include marketing trends, economic issues, government updates on food safety and biosecurity, general food processing and safety, seafood processing, economic development opportunities, food plant security, and an overview of the product development capabilities of the LSU AgCenter Food Science and Technology Pilot Plant.

Registration is \$115 before February 17, 2004 and \$125 after that date. The fee includes refreshments, a reception on Wednesday and light breakfast and lunch on Thursday. Registration can be done online by going to www.lsu.agcenter.com/foodscience and clicking the link under events. For more information call Terri Gilmer or Shannah Spencer at 225/578-5207 or e-mail tgilmer@agctr.lsu.edu.

BASS IN THE BASIN

The Atchafalaya Basin is famous for many things, not the least of which is its bass fishing. However, things have not been the same since 1992. In that year, Hurricane Andrew killed an estimated 5 million bass in the Basin. In order to speed the recovery of the bass population, a temporary 14-inch minimum size was placed on the entire area.



By 1996, bass numbers had recovered, but Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) biologists found that many fishermen liked the regulation and the 14-inch minimum size was made permanent. In the last few years, however, bass anglers have had tough fishing. Many loud and vocal complaints have been heard from all parts of the Basin, with the universal one being that fishermen catch 30-40 bass per day without catching a single legal-sized bass over 14-inches. Demands have been made for modification or removal of the minimum size. (With the exception of designated lakes, no minimum size for bass exists elsewhere in Louisiana.)

On December 2, the Atchafalaya Basin Program Living Resources Committee heard a presentation on bass in the Basin from LDWF biologists. Mike Walker, the chief presenter, explained that their data covered 13 years in the Basin, excluding Lake Henderson. LDWF conducts electrofishing (shocking) samples in the fall of each year

to assess the fish population in the Basin. They have found a lot of year-to-year variation in bass numbers, especially in fish under 14 inches. It seems that years with strong spring floods produce large numbers of small bass and years with weak floods produce fewer fish.

Two events are noticeable in their sampling, the very low numbers of bass in 1992, right after Hurricane Andrew, and low numbers of small bass during the several year drought that ended in 2000. The large numbers of small bass now being seen by anglers are those from the big spawns after the drought ended. Fish 14 inches and longer are mostly those from the poor spawn years during the drought, with their weak spring floods. Walker explained that all 1 and 2-year old, and most 3-year old bass are normally under 14 inches. He added that LDWF has no evidence of stunting in 1 and 2-year old bass and growth rates for 3-year old fish are better now than before the 14-inch minimum size was put in place.

LDWF also surveys fishermen in a carefully designed procedure at 18 different landings around the Basin. They count, measure and weigh fishermen's catches and also collect opinions. The surveys showed that before the 14-inch minimum size was put in effect, the largest number of bass were harvested at 11 inches, followed by 10 inches and then 9 inches. Since the regulations, 14 inches is the most common size harvested and far more 15 and 16-inch fish are taken. Only at 18 and 19 inches is the number fish close when comparing the two periods.

The catch of bass (both fish kept and fish released) per hour fished was about one per hour before regulations. This increased after regulations were adopted. Even in 2003, when many anglers were complaining of poor catches, the survey showed catches were higher than before regulations.

Bass harvest (fish kept) was lower right after Hurricane Andrew than before it and stayed that way to 1996. The year 2003 was not as good as 7 years ago, due to the effect of the drought. Walker predicted that 2003 should be the last year that Basin bass populations negatively are affected by the drought.

Pounds of bass harvested per hour was the same in 1995-96 as before the hurricane, but with fewer fish. The best average size for any year before regulations was 1.7 pounds. Now, every year, the average is over 2 pounds.

LDWF has also surveyed angler opinions twice, in 1995-96 and again in 2003. In the 1995-96 survey, 65% of the 2,656 anglers surveyed wanted to keep the 14-inch minimum size in place, 12% wanted a 12-inch minimum size and only 6% wanted no minimum length restriction. Of the anglers in the survey, 1,532 were bass fishermen and 71% of them favored the 14-inch minimum size rule.

In 2003, less fishermen were surveyed, 639, but again 58% of them favored a 14-inch minimum size. Another 16% preferred a 12-inch limit. Bass anglers made up

266 of the anglers in the survey. Of them, 62% wanted the 14-inch minimum size.

Walker said that LDWF has drawn four conclusions:

- 1) Habitat conditions in the Atchafalaya Basin produce strong and weak year classes (successful yearly spawns) for bass.
- 2) Minimum size regulations tend to level out the differences between strong and weak year classes.
- 3) No evidence exists of stunting in bass in the Basin.
- 4) High fishing pressure in the Basin produces heavy "cropping" of fish over 14 inches long. This means that, on average, bass are harvested fairly quickly after reaching the minimum size.

Many of the bass fishermen in the audience at the meeting expressed disbelief of the data presented. Fishermen in the audience were clearly in two groups — competitive tournament fishermen and camp owner/non-tournament anglers. Tournament anglers showed the most support for LDWF data. The Atchafalaya Basin Living Resources Committee will consider what action to recommend, if any, at its next meeting at 9 a.m. on March 4, 2004. The meeting will be held in the Louisiana Room of the Wildlife and Fisheries Building at 2000 Quail Drive in Baton Rouge. The public is welcome to participate.

RECORD BOOKS AND TAX EXEMPT FORMS

Over the years, many of you have used the LSU AgCenter's *Commercial Fisherman's and Trapper's Record Book* to keep a record of your expenses and earnings. With the new year upon us, now is a good time to get your new record book. Also available are sales tax exemption applications for commercial fishermen. If you would like a record book or sales tax exemption application, call, write, or drop by your local extension marine agent's office.

<u>Agent</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Telephone Numbers</u>
David Bourgeois	Houma & Cut Off	985/873-6495 or 504/632-6852
Rusty Gaudé	Belle Chasse	504/392-6690, ext. 1241
Thomas Hymel	Jeanerette	337/276-5527
Brian LeBlanc	Covington	985/543-4129
Kevin Savoie	Lake Charles	337/491-2065
Mark Schexnayder	Metairie	504/838-1170
Mark Shirley	Abbeville	337/898-4335

Applications for commercial fisherman's sales tax exemptions may also be obtained by calling Louisiana Department of Revenue offices in New Orleans 504/568-5226 or Baton Rouge 225/219-7356. The application must be filled out, signed and notarized before being sent back to the Department of Revenue. A copy of the person's last federal income tax return must be included to prove that the applicant made at least

50% of his or her income from commercial fishing. Also included must be copies of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries vessel license and either the state vessel registration or Coast Guard vessel documentation papers. It takes the Department of Revenue about two weeks to process the paperwork after they receive it.

An individual can get his exemption immediately by going in person to the Louisiana Department of Revenue offices at either 1550 Poydras St, Suite 900, in New Orleans or 617 N. Third St, Second Floor, in Baton Rouge. Applicants should have proof of personal identification, their latest federal income tax return, their vessel license, and their vessel registration or documentation papers.

Possession of a sales tax exemption exempts a commercial fishermen from paying state sales tax on purchases for their fishing business. In some parishes, holders of commercial fisherman's certificates of exemption are also exempted from parish sales taxes.

VERMILION SNAPPER DECLARED OVERFISHED

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has declared that stocks of vermilion snappers, also known as bee-liners or mingos, have been overfished and that overfishing is still occurring. As a result, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council has until next October to produce a plan to present to NMFS to rebuild the vermilion snapper stocks in 10 years or less. Because fishing mortality (deaths) will have to be reduced by between 40 and 50%, both recreational and commercial fishermen will likely have to face more regulations on harvesting this fish.



At their November meeting, several Gulf Council members expressed concern about developing a stock rebuilding plan based on a stock assessment that has data only through 1999. Unfortunately, the earliest that another stock assessment can be done is fall 2004/spring 2005, and it can only be done by delaying the planned stock assessment on scamp grouper.

In the meantime, development of a rebuilding plan for vermilion snapper will proceed. It seems likely that this smaller, bright-red cousin of the red snapper will join it as a highly regulated and controversial fish.

DIRTY FISHING

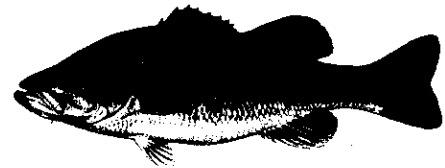
Oceana, the international ocean environmental organization has coined a new word — "Dirty Fishing" — for commercial fisheries that they think have too much bycatch. Their focus is on longlines, gillnets and shrimp trawls (which they call ocean bulldozers). Dirty fishing, Oceana says, kills large numbers of sea turtles, undersized fish, sea birds, whales, porpoises, and non-target fish species all over the world.

Much of this bycatch goes uncounted says Oceana, because of poor reporting or bias in the system for extrapolating bycatch. The solution, according to Oceana is more observers on fishing boats — lots of more observers. Observers are independent representatives hired by government to go to sea on board fishing vessels and count everything that is caught, not just what is landed.

Oceana says that in an ideal world, every fishing boat would have an observer on board, but admits that for some fisheries that would be difficult to do. However, they would settle for observers on 20% to 50% of all fishing vessels, with the higher percentage being required for vessels in fisheries most likely to interact with rare animals such as endangered species. Oceana launched a major observer initiative **Eyes on the Ocean** in November 2003, at the very time that U.S. Congress was debating the appropriation of increased funding for observer programs.

GOING HOME

Competitive fishing, whether in tournaments, rodeos, derbies or tagged fish contests, is rapidly growing. In 2000, it was estimated that about 25,000 contests were held in inland U.S. waters, 78% of which were for black bass. Bass tournaments practice release of the fish after weigh-in. That does not mean, however, that tournaments do not affect bass populations.



Biologists have conducted many studies on mortality (death) rates in released tournament-caught bass. Such mortality averages around 23%. What has not been studied as well are the effects of releasing fish after weigh-in long distances from where they were captured. Concern exists that many of the released bass will not spread out (disperse) and return to their site of capture. If released bass cluster instead of disperse they may experience high mortality from fishermen or other causes.

Recently, a Texas biologist located 12 studies on released bass dispersal and compared their results. The studies were done over a 23-year period, 1975 to 1998. Studies were done in both lakes and rivers. In some studies, the fish were tagged with plastic tags before release; in others, the fish were fitted with radio transmitters and electronically tracked.

Only 14% of the largemouth bass in the studies returned to their capture area. On average, 51% of the fish stayed within one mile of where they were released. The length of time after their release did not affect their rate of return to the capture site. In general, if they didn't quickly return to their capture site, they didn't return at all.

The longest distance dispersed after release in any study was 5.6 miles. Bass tended to disperse more in rivers than in lakes. Once released, an average of 22% of the bass were recaptured by fishermen during the periods of the studies (average 9 months). The biologist concluded that one reason that so few fish dispersed to their

capture sites was due to the effects of tournament capture and handling. The 23% mortality rate for released fish suggests, he said, that the released fish are not in the best condition.

Recapture of released tournament-caught bass must be considered. About 5% of the bass caught die during the tournament, with another 23% dying after release, for a total mortality of 28%. After release, 22% of the fish are caught again. If they are caught in another tournament, they suffer another 28% mortality. If they are caught by anglers who keep their fish, mortality will be higher.

Biologists have recommended against releasing black bass at sites that have easy access and high fishing pressure. It has been recommended that tournament operators transport fish by boat to distant or several release sites. "To date," the author of this analysis says, "these recommendations generally have been disregarded because of a lack of regulatory or other incentives.

Source: *Dispersal of Tournament-caught Black Bass*. Gene R. Wilde. Fisheries, July 2003. Vol. 28, No 7. American Fisheries Society.

THE GUMBO POT

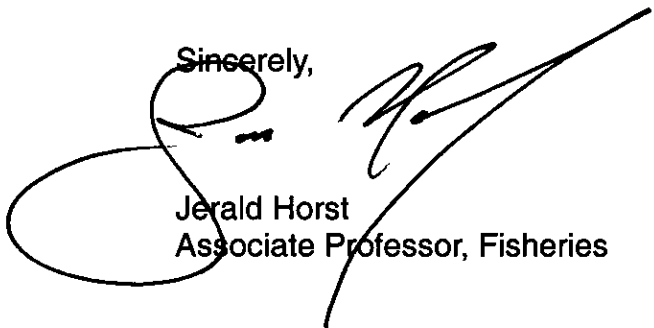
Tangy Glazed Broiled Fillets

This glaze has a distinct tomato taste, but is not overly "ketchupy". Be sure to cook at high heat (broil) to glaze the marinade on the fillets. Any white-fleshed fish is fine for this recipe.

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|--|
| 2 | lb fish fillets | 1/2 | tsp salt |
| 1/3 | cup melted butter | 1/4 | tsp pepper |
| 1/3 | cup ketchup | 1/2 | tsp garlic salt |
| 1/3 | cup frozen lemonade concentrate, thawed | 1/4 | tsp powdered bay leaf or 1 large leaf crumbled |
| 1 | tbsp mustard | | |

Cut fish into serving-size portions and put in a reclosable plastic bag. Combine all other ingredients in a bowl and mix well. Pour the marinade over the fillets in the bag. Close the bag and mix the marinade well with the fillets. Place in refrigerator at least 30 minutes. Heat oven to broil. Spread fillets over a well-greased broiler pan and broil 8 to 10 minutes about 4 inches from the heat. Fish is ready when it flakes easily with a fork. Serves 4.

Sincerely,



Jerald Horst
Associate Professor, Fisheries