

Lagniappe



EXTENSION PROGRAMS
Agriculture and Forestry
Community Leadership
Economic Development
Environmental Sciences
Family and Consumer Sciences
4-H Youth Development
Natural Resources

January 2, 2002 Volume 26, No. 1

GULF SAFETY/OFFSHORE PLATFORM USE MEETING

The terrorist attacks of September 11 have made everyone more security-conscious, including the Gulf of Mexico offshore oil and gas industry. At least 25% of the oil and gas produced in the United States comes from these platforms. As fishermen and divers know, the platforms are very easy to approach by boat. The security of these platforms has become a cause for concern.

In response, the Coast Guard and the Offshore Operators Committee (OOC) has scheduled a meeting at 9 a.m. on Thursday, January 17 at the Pontchartrain Center, 4545 Williams Blvd. in Kenner to discuss security at offshore platforms with fishermen and divers. Although prohibiting vessels from approaching or tying off to platforms has been discussed, other options are likely if the Coast Guard and OOC can get input from interested parties.

These may include notification to the platform by the boat operator by VHF radio of the intent of the visit. However, a great many platforms are not manned and some vessels don't have VHF radios. Input is needed from fishermen and divers to solve the problems. The meeting is free and open to the public.

CRAWFISH TRAP USERS' ALERT

Commercial users of crawfish traps should be reminded that beginning on July 1, 2003, the minimum mesh size on crawfish traps will increase from three-quarters by eleven-sixteenths of an inch to three-quarters by three-quarters of an inch. This law was passed in 1999, but was not put into effect until 2003 so as to allow commercial crawfishermen the opportunity to use up their smaller mesh traps. Crawfishermen need to replace worn-out traps now with ones with the larger mesh size so they aren't holding obsolete traps when the law goes into effect. There is no minimum size for crawfish traps used on private crawfish farms.



CREATURE FEATURE

Humans and their fellow mammals start out life looking pretty much like they will as adults, even at early stages in the womb. This is not true for most animals, especially the 170,000 or so species of invertebrates (animals without backbones) found in the world's oceans.

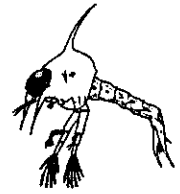


Shrimp

These animals—shrimp, crabs, barnacles, starfish, clams, worms, and so forth, typically spend days, weeks, or even months as tiny free-swimming larvae (babies) floating in the upper 20 feet of the ocean's currents. At the end of this period they drop to the bottom and change into adults. They spawn and start the cycle again.

None of them as larvae resemble the adults; in fact, some look downright weird. When scientists first discovered them in the late 1700s, they thought they were totally unknown creatures rather than the larvae of larger sea life.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, scientists had learned that more animals than not had complex life cycles with these larval "detours" into unusual forms. But this raised several questions: Why do so many animals have these larval stages? If having a larval stage is such an advantage, why don't all marine animals have one? And why do so many larvae look so bizarre?



Crab

Most scientists now agree that many marine animals have evolved these larval forms to aid the spread of their species into all suitable habitats. Oceans are huge, but habitats like coral reefs or bottoms of just the right mud at just the right depths can be spread far apart. Most adult invertebrates cannot travel these distances, especially through areas that they are not adapted for. Setting large numbers of young adrift in the ocean increases the chance that some will survive and end up in suitable locations.

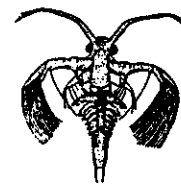


Barnacle

This wide dispersal also helps a species by preventing inbreeding. Inbreeding is a real danger for creatures that are stuck in one place, animals such as barnacles and corals. When the larvae of these animals do settle out of ocean currents they will very likely be close to others of their species that they are not closely related to.

In spite of these benefits, the costs are high, which is why not all animals have such a stage. Ocean waters are full of predators such as jellyfish, arrowworms, and many, many other invertebrates and small fish that specialize in gobbling up larvae. Ocean currents can also sweep larvae away from suitable habitat as well as towards it. In fact, almost any ocean current is more likely to move a larvae away from safety than toward it. Only a tiny fraction survive.

Most larvae look unusual, sometimes almost unreal. Scientists theorize that those odd shapes evolved because they help the animal survive. For example, many larvae have large oversized spines. These increase their size and make them more difficult for a predator to swallow. Sometimes, young fish do indeed die when larvae catch in their throats. Other larvae have many bristles that they can flare out when attacked by a fish. Some larvae also have unusual shapes to help them feed. Sea urchin larvae have long projections lined with tiny hair-like cilia to pull in food. Strings of mucus serve as "fishing lines" for some sponge larvae.



Water Flea

The proof that the larval method of reproduction works is in the oceans, in the form of untold billions of crabs, shrimp, lobsters, barnacles, worms, and sponges.

BOAT FUEL TAX BENEFITS

According to a survey by the Boat Owners Association of the United States, Louisiana is one of 20 states, and the only one on the gulf coast, which doesn't return state highway taxes collected on boat fuel to the state boating improvement program. Instead, the moneys collected go into a highway fund to be used for highway construction, road repairs and bridges.

Of the 30 states which return state gas tax revenues to their boating program, 4 also make tax refunds available to individuals who apply for them. Four of the 20 states that keep boat fuel taxes in their highway funds also offer individual refunds. Louisiana is not one of them.

Boat owners in boating trust fund states benefit from having a stable source of money, as the fund pays for on-the-water law enforcement and search and rescue, as well as marina construction and maintenance, launching ramps, pump-out facilities, boating education classes, safety campaign and web sites.

State boating programs with no dedicated trust fund usually suffer because they have to compete with other high priority agencies and programs for general funds. A 10-year-old survey of boaters indicated that 1.08% of all motor fuel used in the U.S. is used by boats. A more recent survey in Minnesota came up with a figure of 1.5% for that state.

A change in Louisiana would require not just a simple vote of the legislature, but a constitutional amendment. A constitutional amendment requires a vote of the legislature and a vote by the people of the state during a general election.

Source: *No Deposit: No Return*. Elaine Dickinson. BOAT/U.S. Magazine. September, 2001.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD ON T.E.D. CHANGES EXTENDED

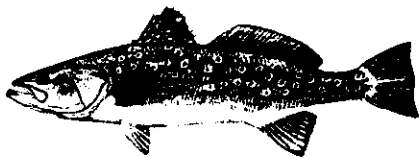
The National Marine Fisheries Service is extending until February 15, 2002, the public comment period on their proposal to change TED regulations to allow better escapement of large sea turtles. Proposed changes include:

- Requiring the use of either the recently approved double cover flap TED or a TED with an opening of at least 71-inch straight-line stretched mesh measurement;
- Disallowing the use of the hooped hard TED, weedless TED and Jones TED;
- Disallowing the use of accelerator funnels;
- Requiring bait shrimpers to use TEDs in states where a state-issued bait shrimp license holder can also fish for food shrimp from the same vessel;
- Requiring tow time restrictions on try nets with headrope lengths of 12 feet or less.

Written comments should be sent to: NOAA Fisheries Office of Protected Resources, Attn: Chief, Endangered Species Division, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3282. Comments may also be faxed to 301-713-0376.

TROUT AND REDFISH IN THE MARKET

A question that we hear quite often is "if redfish are gamefish and speckled trout are nearly so, how come either or both species are still found in Louisiana restaurants and markets?" Louisiana redfish were declared gamefish in 1988 and the commercial harvest of speckled trout was dried to a trickle by the Legislature in 1995.



Assuming that the fillets in the market or fish on the menu are properly identified, there are several legitimate sources for both species. North Carolina and Virginia each allow limited year round harvest of both fish. Mississippi allows both species to be harvested under a quota, beginning each October.

All three states are important sources of supply for Louisiana. Although quality is highly erratic, Mexico produces large numbers of speckled trout for export.

Louisiana also has a late November through April season for the commercial harvest of speckled trout with rods and reels. Restrictions on this fishery are quite high, especially on who can get the license. Annual landings have averaged only slightly over 76 thousand pounds, with an average of 40 participants for the last 3 years.

Although speckled trout are extremely difficult to farm-raise because of their demand for live foods, substantial supplies of aquacultured redfish are available. Although

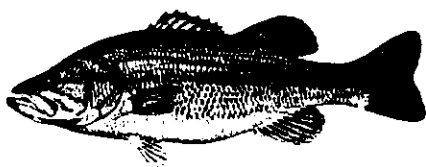
redfish farming in the U.S. has not nearly lived up to its prediction, one farm is hanging on in Louisiana, and two more operate in Texas. By far, the biggest supply of aquacultured redfish comes from Asia, particularly Taiwan. Smaller amounts are also available from the West Indies.

Commerce in both species is very closely monitored by the Enforcement Division of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. The department's Special Investigation Unit regularly inspects seafood dealers' premises and records in great detail. They also conduct what are called interstate pulse operations at points of import/export, including highways. Patrols are also conducted on the water.

Because redfish are gamefish, special restrictions on this species exist. Anyone planning to bring redfish into Louisiana is required to call the Enforcement Division at least 24 hours before the fish enter the state. After the required information is provided, the department will issue a confirmation number, which must appear on the packaging for each sale of fish from that lot.

DO TOURNAMENTS AFFECT BASS DISTRIBUTION?

Largemouth bass tournaments routinely practice catch and release. However, tournament anglers catch these fish from many places and the fish are often released in one place, usually near the weigh-in location. Fishery managers across the U.S. have expressed concerns about this. Often other anglers target these areas of release hoping for good catches. The concern of biologists is that this may result in an increased kill, either through direct harvest or due to the stress of the fish being caught and handled again.



In Oklahoma, a 55% increase in the number of bass tournaments has occurred between 1994 and 1998. Much of the increase has come from weekly evening "jackpot tournaments" that use the same weigh-in and release sites for up to 25 weeks in a row. In response to this growth in pressure, biologists there conducted a study of tournament-released bass in 6,120 acre Lake Thunderbird.

The goals of the study were to determine how much the released bass spread out from the release site, and their recapture harvest rates. The biologists tagged before release, tournament-caught bass taken during 3-hour evening contests between April and September. The biologists publicly advertised to encourage anglers to report catching a

tagged fish and also attended all Wednesday night tournament weigh-ins that year and the following year.

Two hundred thirty-two recaptures were recorded during the two year study, including 21 bass that were caught twice, 2 that were caught 3 times and 1 that was caught 4 times. One fish was recaptured less than 30 minutes after being tagged and released. Tournament anglers made 48% of the recaptures and non-tournament anglers caught 52%.

The first year, 84% of the fish were recaptured on shorelines connected to the release site and 16% were recaptured from areas that the bass had to reach by crossing deep, open water. Although two fish were recaptured over 7 miles from the release site within two weeks of release, the average distance moved for recaptured fish was three-tenths of a mile during the first year and 1.9 miles during the second year. For the whole study, 55% of the bass were caught within 1 mile of their release. A cove next to the release site accounted for 37% of the recaptures.

The study concluded that many largemouth bass do not travel extensively for some time after release, even though many were free for over 18 months before they were recaptured. As a result, a recommendation to tournament organizers at Lake Thunderbird and other such Oklahoma lakes is to use a live-release boat or fishing-hauling truck or trailer to redistribute fish away from high-use areas. Another option that tournament organizers may have is to rotate weigh-in sites throughout the year to distribute released fish.

Source: *Dispersal of Black Bass Following Tournament Release in an Oklahoma Reservoir*. Eugene R. Gilliland. Proceedings of the 53rd Annual Conference, Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. 1999.

B.R.D.S. AND SHRIMPERS: A STUDY

Shrimpers, especially offshore shrimpers, have faced increasing regulation. In 1998, shrimpers were required to use approved bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) in their trawls when fishing in federal waters. While an enormous amount of research has been funded on biology and gear, only one study has been done to determine the social and economic affects on fishermen of BRDs and other requirements such as TEDs.

Researchers from the University of South Alabama conducted detailed interviews with Alabama offshore shrimp boat captains in 1987 (before TED requirements), 1994 (after TEDs, but before BRD requirements), and 1999 (after BRD requirements), and compared the results. They looked at profitability, stress, job satisfaction, bycatch experiences and attitudes, and psychological effects of increased regulations. For the 1999 research,

interviews were conducted with the same captains that were interviewed in 1994 to get the most accurate results possible.

Financially, the 1999 interviews indicated that shrimpers were better off than in 1987 and 1994, but that the fishermen were fishing harder. In 1999, offshore captains averaged 14 trips and 265 days at sea each year, with an average trip length of 19 days. The average trip length was 9 days in 1994 and 11 days in 1987.

The research done in 1987 indicated that shrimpers experienced a greater number of sources of stress than did people with land-based jobs. Between 1987 to 1994, shrimpers experienced a big jump in job overload, probably due to TED regulations. Overload increased again, but not as dramatically in the 1999 sample. The research indicated that BRDs may be one reason, although a small one, that fishermen are working harder than in the past. However, conflict between shipmates increased significantly in 1999 over 1994, with captains complaining bitterly about the difficulty of finding good crews.

Compared to the 1994 sample, shrimpers in 1999 showed more job satisfaction from the view of loving their work, especially its freedom and independence, probably because shrimpers were struggling with TED regulations in 1994. However, shrimpers showed a very large drop in job satisfaction in relation to the hours they put in, the number and length of trips, crew relations, and increases in competition.

The 1994 study showed that psychological distress was twice as high among shrimpers as among the general population of U.S. men. This had not changed in 1999. Satisfaction with life remained the same as in 1994, but the feeling of being in control of their future declined sharply from 1994, which itself was lower than 1987. In contrast, interviewed shrimpers had a brighter outlook for the future in 1999 than in 1994, although it still wasn't as positive as in 1987. Psychological distress can lead to depression (inability to sleep, stay focused, or make rapid decisions). The results can be serious in an occupation as dangerous as commercial fishing.

When asked about the affects of BRDs on their shrimping operations, shrimpers estimated that shrimp loss from their catch due to BRDs was 17.9 %. About 60% of the captains said that BRDs had indeed reduced bycatch, although most said that the amount of time to sort shrimp has not been reduced.

The number one problem they listed as caused by BRDs was easily shrimp loss. The problems they had with BRDs was that they break or bend, followed by backwash, and clogging with debris. Less than 1 in 10 shrimpers reported no problems associated with

BRDs. When asked to name the best thing about BRDs, almost two thirds couldn't name anything. The most common good thing for the ones that did list something, was loss of bycatch, named by about 14% of the captains. Over 90% of them said they would not use BRDs if they weren't required.

Source: *Objective and Subjective Effects of Bycatch Reduction Devices on Gulf Coast Commercial Shrimp Fishers: A Final Report.* Grant Number: NA77FD0077. J.S. Thomas, G.D. Johnson and C.M. Formichella. Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of South Alabama.

UNDERWATER OBSTRUCTION LOCATIONS

The Louisiana Fishermen's Gear Compensation Fund has asked that we print the coordinates of sites for which damage has been claimed in the two months. The coordinates are listed below:

<u>Loran Sites</u>			<u>Lat. & Long. Sites</u>		
2786	4686	TERREBONNE	29 01.978	90 44.474	TERREBONNE
2824	4687	TERREBONNE	29 12.186	90 09.061	LAFOURCHE
2907	4695	ST. BERNARD	29 18.007	89 23.073	PLAQUEMINES
			29 22.009	89 40.572	PLAQUEMINES
			39 50.619	89 38.305	ST BERNARD

HANDLINING FOR FINFISH

Since most gill net use in the coastal waters of Louisiana was outlawed several years ago, we get many questions about other methods of catching finfish commercially. Most people are interested in the use of rods and reels to catch saltwater fish for sale.

With one exception, rods and reels are not legal commercial gear. That exception is for those people that were basically put out of business by the gill net legislation. To qualify for the rod and reel license, persons must have held a saltwater gill net license in two of the three years 1993, 1994 and 1995, and must have earned at least 50% of their income from commercial fishing in two of those same years. Also, they must never have had a class 3 or greater fisheries violation conviction.

There are no such restrictions however on licensing for the use of handlines or for poles without reels. Bamboo poles without reels, called "slaughter poles", were commonly used to catch market fish years ago.

Handlines and poles without reels are licensed with the set line commercial gear license, costing \$25. A commercial fisherman's license at \$55 is also required and if a boat is used in the part of the state zoned as saltwater, a \$15 vessel license is also required. The set line license is the same gear license required for the commercial use of trotlines.

All inshore commercial species may be harvested with this gear except for speckled trout and striped mullet. In offshore waters, federal permits are required to take reef fish, cobia, mackerels, tunas and sharks.

MAGNUSUN-STEVENS FISHERY ACT AMENDMENT

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act is again up before U.S. Congress for amendment. The act, when it was originally passed over 20 years ago, was often called the "200-mile act", because it extended U.S. fisheries management authority out to 200 miles off of the country's coasts. It effectively pushed foreign fishing fleets out of U.S. waters and allowed for expansion of the American fishing industry.

The act also put the federal government in the business of fishery management, something that the individual states had always handled. Before the act, the federal role in fisheries was mostly research on new fisheries and gear, and efforts on fisheries development and fisheries marketing.

Each amendment or reauthorization of the act has given the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) more responsibility and authority. This year's proposal is no exception. The Fisheries Recovery Act (HR 2570), as it is called, would provide for major changes in the way U.S. fisheries under federal authority are managed. Some of the major changes proposed are as follows:

Bycatch

Language on bycatch reduction efforts is greatly strengthened. Everywhere in the previous act that NMFS was directed to minimize bycatch, the language is to be changed to direct fishery management to avoid bycatch. Each fishery management council, including our Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, would be directed to produce within one year, a method to assess the amount and kinds of bycatch in any managed fishery, and directed to reduce bycatch each year for five years. The councils are also directed to include bycatch in determining harvests from a fishery.

Essential Fish Habitat

Closure of an area to the use of a fishing gear or practice would be authorized if that gear or practice has negative effects on essential fish habitat. Also the Secretary of

the U.S. Department of Commerce along with the fishery management councils would be directed to identify and facilitate the use of gear and practices that have less impact on essential fish habitat and produce less bycatch.

Council Membership and Voting

In the past, the law provided that appointments to the fishery management councils should be balanced between recreational and commercial fishing interests. The new proposal would add environmental group representatives on an equal basis with recreational and commercial representatives. The proposal would also require that state governors consult with conservation groups as well as commercial and recreational interests before sending recommendations in for membership on a council.

The proposed legislation also strengthens the provisions that prevent a council member from voting on a fishery management measure that would result in a financial benefit for the member. It provides that if a council votes on a measure before the Commerce Secretary can make a decision on a member's eligibility to vote, and that member's vote affected the council decision, the secretary may overrule the council vote.

Observer Programs

The proposed legislation requires that for any federally managed fishery, that observers shall be required to be carried by selected commercial vessels, except for charter vessels which carry 6 or less passengers. The use of observers is optional under current law. The proposed law would require a user fee to be assessed on fish landings by value in order to fund half of the costs of the observer program.

Marine Ecosystems

The legislation proposes to repeal the language that encourages the development of fisheries for underutilized species and substitutes language that requires consideration of the impacts of fishing on other species in the ecosystem before a fishery is developed. It would remove efficiency as a requirement for fishery management and replace it with a requirement to consider ecosystem principles and how fishing affects predator-prey and other ecological relationships in marine ecosystems. It would also change the definition of "overfishing" so that a fishery could be declared overfished, even if the stock of target fish is healthy, if the fishing may cause ecosystem problems.

The law would require each council to develop Fisheries Ecosystem Plans for the major ecosystems in its area and submit them to the Commerce Secretary. If the Secretary rejects or only partly approves a plan, the council has 15 months to revise it. If a council fails to submit an approved Fishery Ecosystem Plan, the Secretary will develop one.

Gear Modification

The proposed act would provide financial assistance for fishermen to offset the costs of modifying fishing practices and gear to avoid bycatch and reduce damage to essential fish habitat.

Fishery Management Approaches

If passed, the legislation would require fisheries managers to take "the precautionary approach" whenever they don't have complete data on fish, essential fish habitat, or marine ecosystems. This simply means that if any research data is poor or missing that managers must use the management option that allows less fishing to occur.

THE GUMBO POT

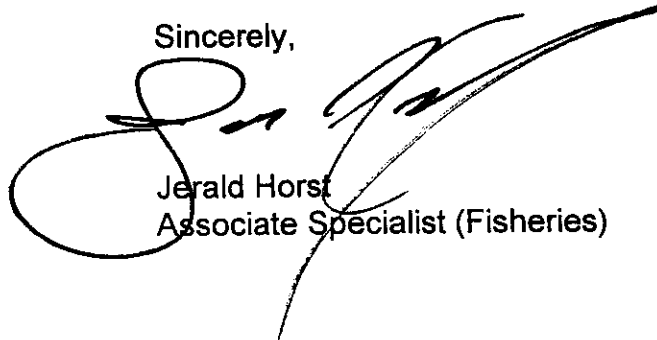
Crawfish Stuffed Pistolettes

Crawfish breads of any sort are good and this one is no exception. It's a simple recipe, just use good bread. It's also quick to prepare and I like quick, but good, dishes.

1	lb crawfish	1	package chopped broccoli
1	onion, chopped	1	lb Velveeta cheese
1	bell pepper, chopped	1	small can mushrooms
1	tsp salt	1	can cream of mushroom soup
1	tsp black pepper	12	pistolettes
			butter

Mix all the ingredients exceptpistolettes in a saucepan and cook slowly for 15 minutes. Cut ends off ofpistolettes and scoop out the insides. Stuffpistolettes with the mixture. Close ends with toothpicks. Brush tops ofpistolettes with butter and bake at 350 degrees until brown. Serves 6

Sincerely,



Jerald Horst
Associate Specialist (Fisheries)