

FLORIDA AQUACULTURE

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FLORIDA RANKS 7TH IN U.S. AQUACULTURE VALUE

Every five years USDA surveys all U.S. farms for production, sales, crop, and other statistical data. Their recently released report for 2007 reported 2.2 million farms sold \$297 billion in agricultural production. Aquaculture across the United States ranked 12th amongst all agricultural sectors with 6,409 farms reporting farm-gate income of \$1.4 billion. Florida aquaculture ranked 7th amongst all states with 469 farms reporting farm income of \$61.3 million. Aquatic plant production is not included in these statistics.

Ornamental fish (freshwater and marine tropics, koi,

and goldfish) continue to be the largest segment of Florida aquaculture with 203 farms reporting farm-gate income of \$32.1 million. Florida is the leading producer of ornamental fish in the United States followed by California at \$13.4 million. Mollusc production (hard clam) is the next largest segment with 130 farms reporting \$15.2 million in sales. Florida ranked fourth in the nation behind Washington (\$85.2 million), Louisiana (\$37.3 million), and Virginia (\$36.9 million). Other aquaculture products (alligator, turtle, triploid grass carp, live rock, snails, frogs) produced by 43 farms yielded

\$6.2 million. Other food fish production (hybrid striped bass, tilapia, sturgeon) from 37 farms reported \$3.4 million in sales. Crustacean production (shrimp, crawfish, prawn) from 17 farms reported \$2.5 million in sales. Catfish production by 54 farms sold \$979,000. Sport and game fish (largemouth bass, sunfish) production from 31 farms totaled \$622,000. Five bait farms reported \$71,000 in sales.

The complete 2007 Census of Agriculture report can be accessed at: <http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/index.asp>.

FLORIDA BUDGET CHALLENGES CONTINUE TO GROW

The Florida Legislature convened a Special Session on January 5th to address the projected shortfall of state revenues used to pay for state agency operations. Even though the State of Florida budget for fiscal year 2008-2009 was \$5.7 billion less than the state budget for fiscal year 2007-2008, revenue collections

continue to diminish and were expected to be almost \$3 billion below the June estimates. Each quarter a revenue estimation is produced to guide state agency spending. Florida's Constitution prohibits deficit spending.

During the Special Session that finished on January 14th, the Florida Legislature

passed several bills to reduce costs and they approved a modified budget for the rest of the fiscal year which ends on June 30, 2009. The bills that passed mainly dealt with reducing spending for travel and amending provisions of the law relating to the trust fund accounts that are being

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Please Note

The telephone and fax number for the Division's office in Bartow have been changed. The new numbers are:

Tel: 863-519-5262

Fax: 863-519-5266

PROGRESS WITH OYSTER POST HARVEST PROCESSING

“THE FLORIDA OYSTER INDUSTRY MET AND GREATLY EXCEEDED THE 25% POST HARVEST PROCESSING CAPACITY”

Over the past seven years, the Division of Aquaculture has been working with the Florida oyster industry, the University of Florida (UF), and the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference (ISSC) to develop and promote Post Harvest Processing (PHP) technologies to reduce *Vibrio* bacteria. The goal of this collaborative effort is to “seek effective options that are practical for the nature and size of Florida’s oyster industry.”

In 2001, the ISSC established a requirement for Gulf States to develop the capacity to PHP 25% of the Gulf oyster production within three years. In 2002 the University of Florida received a U.S. Department of Agriculture grant for oyster post harvest processing. The known commercially available PHP technologies included: (1) freezing, (2) cool pasteurization, (3) high hydrostatic pressure, and (4) irradiation. UF pro-



Nitrogen freeze tunnel

duced a report in 2002 comparing PHP costs, capacities, advantages and disadvantages.

The Division surveyed the Florida oyster in 2003 to characterize the industry and to determine the current and future capacity to post harvest process oysters. The

Florida oyster industry identified freezing as the most practical method for immediate implementation. UF successfully tested walk-in freezers and IQF freezing tunnels for *Vibrio vulnificus*. In 2004, the Division conducted a follow-up survey and determined that the Florida oyster industry met and greatly exceeded the 25% post harvest processing capacity (as did all Gulf of Mexico States).

In 2005, UF established an oyster industry laboratory in Apalachicola Florida to con-

duct PHP validation studies and verification sampling. During the same year they validated and verified heat shock followed by IQF freezing.

In 2005, mollusc irradiation was approved by the U. S. Food and Drug Administration. In 2006, the ISSC required regulatory controls to reduce the risk of illness from *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* in oysters. Last year a Florida company expressed interest in providing gamma irradiation services to the oyster industry. During the same year, irradiation was validated by UF as a PHP for *Vibrio vulnificus*.

A listing of molluscan shellfish processors with validated PHP processes is available from the ISSC (<http://www.issc.org/php.asp>).

For additional information contact David Heil, heild@doacs.state.fl.us. To acquire the UF reports, contact Steve Otwell, otwell@ufl.edu, or Victor Garrido, vmga@ufl.edu.

FLORIDA SHELLFISH PROGRAM SATISFIES FDA REQUIREMENTS

Each year the U.S. Food and Drug Administration conducts an evaluation of Florida’s Shellfish Sanitation Program in accordance with National Shellfish Sanitation Program (NSSP) Model Ordinance guidelines.

For fiscal year 2008, FDA found that the Growing Area Classification and Processing and Shipping Elements meets NSSP Model Ordinance requirements. They also commented that they will be conducting evaluations of the

Growing Area Classification and Control of Harvest program elements and the DACS Shellfish Laboratory in Apalachicola during FY 2009.

OFFSHORE AQUACULTURE FMP APPROVED BY GULF COUNCIL

During their late January meeting, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council approved a comprehensive fishery management plan (FMP) for offshore marine aquaculture in federal waters. The Council utilized authority granted by the Magnusen-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to create the first aquaculture oriented fishery management plan in the nation.

State and federal agency and stakeholder representatives from Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas

makeup the Council. An advisory committee composed of aquaculture extension, fishery enforcement, environmental non-government organizations, and state agencies provided technical input to early drafts. Subsequent public comment periods further improved the plan.

The plan does not supersede U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, or U.S. Army Corp of Engineers regulatory or permitting au-

thorities and focuses on species and habitat conservation. The plan entitled *Fishery Management Plan for Regulating Offshore Marine Aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico* now moves to the Department of Commerce for approval and, if successful, to a public rule development process managed by the National Marine Fisheries Service to implement and enforce the FMP provisions.

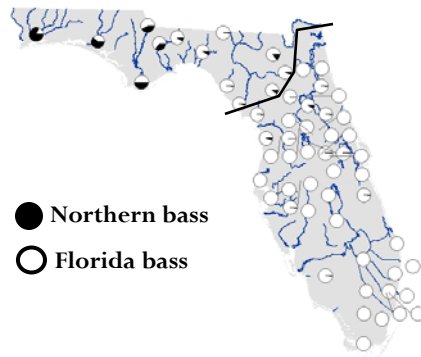
Visit <http://www.gulfcouncil.org> and click on "downloadable files" to find and read the FMP.

FLORIDA LARGEMOUTH BASS PROTECTION PROPOSED

Florida's official state freshwater fish, the Florida largemouth bass, is nationally and internationally recognized as a superb game fish. As a consequence of its fame, the species has been stocked throughout the Southeast, Mexico, South America, and many other locations.

Unfortunately, Northern, Florida and an intergrade (i.e., hybrid) of the two bass have been stocked indiscriminately over time into Florida ponds and lakes. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) completed a genetic analysis and determined the distribution of Florida bass (pure white circles) and intergrade largemouth bass populations (circles as black and white pie diagrams). The frequency or percentage of genes (i.e.,

alleles) from the two subspecies in each population are illustrated in pie diagrams on the map by the white (Florida



bass) and black (northern bass) shading in the circles.

To protect the Florida bass genetics, the FWC presented a proposal to Florida bass producers during three February workshops to prohibit stocking of Northern bass and Northern-Florida intergrades south and east of the Suwannee River (line on map). And to work with bass producers

that hold the Aquaculture Certificate of Registration to tag, test, and changeover their brood stock to authentic Florida bass. Northern-Florida intergrade may continue to be sold and stocked in the Panhandle (north and west of the Suwannee River).

Florida bass producers are in favor the proposal and will be working with FWC and the Division to implement changes in production. The agencies will also be working together to enforce a Florida bass stocking requirement below the Suwannee River. Implementation of a regulation to prohibit stocking of the Northern bass throughout the state is planned for 2010.

For additional information, contact Kal Knickerbocker at knicke@doacs.state.fl.us.

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FLORIDA'S BUDGET (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

used to offset the loss of revenue. The Division of Aquaculture's budget was reduced, but fared very well compared to others. In the Division's reductions, one vacant position, a laboratory technician based in Apalachicola, was removed, a small reduction in part time position funding and two recurring categories of general revenue funding were moved to a non-recurring category, but fully funded. The laboratory position will be replaced with a part time position.

Funds that are designated for the oyster relay program, the Aquaculture Review Council

Projects, Indian River Research and Education Center, and the Tropical Aquaculture Lab were not reduced beyond the 4 percent holdback that had occurred in July.

Current revenue projections released in February continue to show a decline in revenues and budgets will be reduced further during the regular session which began on Tuesday, March 3, for the fiscal year starting on July 1, 2009.

Additional information should be available in the next newsletter. If you have questions, please contact Sherman Wilhelm at wihels@doacs.state.fl.us.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE AND
CONSUMER SERVICES

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