



# 2002 Legislature Kind to Aquaculture

Despite a very tight budgetary year, the Florida Legislature has continued to generously support aquaculture growth and development. The top three aquaculture research projects approved by the Aquaculture Review Council (ARC) in June 2001 have been included in the Legislature's budget for the state's fiscal year (July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003) along with funding for several other programs. The Governor has 15 days from the receipt of the Legislative budget to accept or line item veto appropriations. Within the Division of Aquaculture's Specific Appropriation section of the budget the following has been included:

### Aquaculture Review Council Recommended Projects

- Commercial Scale Penaeid Shrimp Demonstration in Inland Freshwater Systems. UF-IFAS Indian River Research and Education Center. \$235,368. Public-private partnership for commercial scale demonstration and economic feasibility analysis of farming marine shrimp in freshwater ponds linked to treatment systems that may become a BMP and/or recycling of water to other crops.
- Educational Training Workshop. Florida Aquaculture Association. \$20,000. Organize and manage a two-day aquaculture production and marketing education and training workshop.
- Develop Marine Fish Hatchery and Nursery Culture. Mote Marine Laboratory. \$501,925. Develop hatchery and nursery culture technology to produce marine fish for restocking efforts.

### New and Continued Program Funding

- UF-IFAS Indian River Research and Education Center - Aquaculture Program. \$1,182,779.
- Sturgeon Production Working Group. \$100,000.
- UF-IFAS Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory. \$121,260.

For additional information, contact Kal Knickerbocker, 850-488-4033 or [knickek@doacs.state.fl.us](mailto:knickek@doacs.state.fl.us).

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# ARC Chair Resigns

Mr. Tim Hennessy, long time chair of the Aquaculture Review Council, has resigned his position citing business and family obligations as reasons. "I have regretfully accepted the resignation of Tim Hennessy," said Commissioner of Agriculture Charles H. Bronson. "Tim has been a dominant and driving force for the Florida aquaculture industry for the last 20 years. He always did what was best for the industry even if it hurt him personally."



Tim has held a variety of positions that have greatly benefited aquaculture at the state and national level. He was the first chair of the Aquaculture Review Council in 1984 and regained the chair in 1991, holding the position until his resignation. Tim was the first president of the Florida Aquaculture Association, and remains a member of the Florida Tropical Fish Farms Association and National Aquaculture Association. He has also served as a technical advisor to the United States Congressional Committee on Science and Technology and provided extensive comments to the Office of Technology Assessment during the writing of a widely quoted analysis on invasive aquatic species. Ekk Will Waterlife Resources is a highly respected name in the tropical fish industry and has received over 275 industry awards for excellence, captive breeding, and introducing new fish to the aquarium hobby.

Tim and his family started a prawn farm near Arcadia in 1975. They were not successful but were committed to the art and science of aquaculture. In 1981 they purchased Ekk Will Waterlife Resources and became the largest tropical fish farm in the world. Along the way their many achievements were recognized by awards that included the Florida Commissioner of Agriculture's Ag-Environmental Leadership Award, NFIB and Dunn & Bradstreet's Best of America Award (S.E. Regional winner and National Runner up), U.S. Small Business Administration's Florida Small Business Person of the Year, U. S. Chamber of Commerce's Florida's Blue Chip Enterprise, Florida Department of Commerce Small Business Person of the Year and Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce Small Business of the Year.

During his tenure as Chair to the Aquaculture Review Council, Mr. Hennessy oversaw the recognition that aquaculture is agriculture, resolution of regulatory challenges for hard clam farming, construction of the Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory, creation of a one-stop regulatory shop in the new Division of Aquaculture and continuous changes in the Florida Aquaculture Policy Act to benefit industry growth and environmental protection. Please join the Commissioner of Agriculture in thanking Tim Hennessy, his family and Ekk Will Waterlife Resources for many years of dedicated service.

# Apalachicola Bay Shellfish News

## Oyster Harvesting License Go on Sale

The application dates for the 2002-2003 Apalachicola Bay Oyster Harvesting License (AP) are May 16 through June 28, 2002.

AP licenses will be issued at the time of purchase at the Shellfish Center located at 260 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Apalachicola.

Persons 18 years or older who are applying for an AP license for the first time to commercially harvest oysters from the Apalachicola Bay System are required to attend an educational seminar at the Apalachicola National Estuarine Reserve at 9 a.m. on one of the following dates: May 15, 23, 29 or June 5 and 26. Registration begins 30 minutes prior to the seminar. Seating is limited and is on a first-come, first-served basis. No applicant will be admitted after the seminar begins.

The educational seminar is no longer required for anyone who holds a current AP license or who previously held an AP license.

As in the past, the fee for the AP license is \$100.00 for Florida residents and \$500.00 for non-residents, and is valid from July 1, 2002 through June 30, 2003. The law imposes a \$500.00 late fee, in addition to the \$100.00 license fee, for failure to pay the license fee during the issuance period.

Each AP license applicant will be eligible to receive up to \$100.00 credit toward one Saltwater Products License (SP). Applications for AP and SP licenses must be made at the same time to receive credit. Temporary SP licenses will be issued at the Shellfish Center for those who are purchasing an AP license.

AP license holders can purchase the license by check or money order (No Cash) at the Apalachicola Shellfish Center from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday between May 16 and June 28, 2002. No license sales will occur Saturday or Sunday, June 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>.

If you have any questions you may contact the Apalachicola Shellfish Center at 850-653-8317.

## Summer Oyster Harvesting Season Announced July 1, 2002 - September 30, 2002

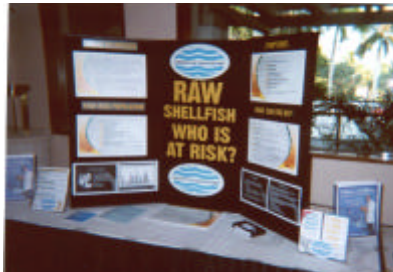
Oysters may be harvested from sunrise to sunset. Oysters must be under refrigeration within six (6) hours of the time of harvest. Oyster harvesting is permitted five days a week, Sunday through Thursday, during the Summer Harvesting Season, in areas that are open for harvest. Commercial harvesters must tag all product before leaving the harvesting area and the product must be sold to a certified dealer.

Contact the Apalachicola Shellfish Center, 850-653-8317, for areas open for oyster harvest.

## Vibrio Education Efforts Continue

The Division has received a grant from the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference to complete *Vibrio vulnificus* and raw oyster consumption educational activities. Consumer education is the first and foremost tool to reduce illness related to *Vibrio vulnificus*.

The project includes a partnership with Dr. Roberta Hammond with the Florida Department of Health to conduct the following *Vibrio vulnificus*-related activities between March 2002 and February 2003:



1. Press release.
2. Educational brochure for restaurant operators.
3. Educational information published in medical support groups newsletters.
4. Education materials and training to Florida restaurant inspectors.
5. Educational brochures and information to Florida liver disease support groups.
6. Educational display at the Florida Nurses Association annual meeting.
7. Educational display at the Florida Dietitians Association annual meeting.
8. Developing a *Vibrio* training module to educate nurses and dietitians.
9. Conduct a train-the-trainer course for Department of Health health educators.
10. The newly trained Department of Health educators provide *Vibrio vulnificus* education training to local chapters of nurses and dietitians.

For additional information, contact David Heil 850-488-4033.

## Five Remote Sensing Sites Open

Five weather and water quality data collection stations are up and running. Remote sensing stations located in the Alligator Harbor, Charlotte Harbor, Gulf Jackson, Horseshoe and Indian River aquaculture use zones are sending weather and water quality data to the Division's web page ([http://www.FloridaAquaculture.com/Sondes/sonde\\_home.htm](http://www.FloridaAquaculture.com/Sondes/sonde_home.htm)).

The Division is seeking farmer comment on data quality and its presentation to improve the web set. Please send comments to [aquaculture\\_web@doacs.state.fl.us](mailto:aquaculture_web@doacs.state.fl.us).

A technical bulletin entitled, "Water Quality and its Role on Hard Clam Production," is available from Leslie Sturmer, 352-543-5057 or [lnst@gnv.ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:lnst@gnv.ifas.ufl.edu), for clam farmers wishing to interpret what the data may mean to improve clam farm management and production.

## Hard Clams Test Negative for Saxitoxin

The Division has been directly involved in the recent human illnesses associated with the consumption of puffer fish harvested from the Titusville Florida vicinity. The potent saxitoxin found in the flesh and other parts of the puffer fish is one of the same toxins that causes paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) in molluscan shellfish. This is the first time that PSP toxins have been found in Florida.

To assure the safety of Florida shellfish, the Division has cooperated with the hard clam aquaculture industry to extensively sample clams for saxitoxin from multiple areas in the Indian River Lagoon as well as control samples from the Charlotte Harbor and Cedar Key areas. All hard clams were negative for saxitoxin. Collection of additional samples is likely.

Ingestion of contaminated shellfish results in a wide variety of symptoms, depending upon the toxins present, their concentrations in the shellfish and the amount of contaminated shellfish consumed. In the case of PSP, the effects are predominantly neurological and include tingling, burning, numbness, drowsiness, incoherent speech, and respiratory paralysis.



### **BMP Notes**

#### **Multiple Facilities and Aquaculture Certification**

Each aquaculture facility location requires a separate Certificate of Registration. Compliance with the Aquaculture Best Management Practices is determined at each facility location ensuring that a problem at one location does not jeopardize the compliance status of another location. Please verify that you have a certificate for each location of your operation.

#### **Identifying Aquaculture Products**

The Aquaculture Certification Number (AQ#) must be on all receipts, bills of sale, bills of lading or other such manifests connected with the possession, transportation or sale of aquaculture products. Shipping boxes or shellfish tags must also be marked with the AQ#.

**If you have a question about BMPs, call or send them to Kal Knickerbocker, 850-410-0875 or [knickek@doacs.state.fl.us](mailto:knickek@doacs.state.fl.us).**

## Red Tide: Economic, Production and Market Impacts

During seven months of red tide (September 2001 - March 2002), 106 hard clam farmers in the Charlotte and Lee Counties could not market their product. Lost sales during that period are estimated to be \$3 million. This estimate agrees with a recent University of Florida economic impact study that used 1999 sales from this region. If we adopt the UF study results and their methodology to estimate total economic impact, then the total red tide impact has been \$4.9 million (direct sales, labor income and value-added).

There are further market, production and economic implications associated with the prolonged closure:

- The United States is in an economic slump. Seafood sales have been negatively impacted in demand and value. It has been estimated that hard clams are selling 20 to 25 percent below "normal" market prices. Demand is 50 percent below normal.
- Florida hard clam farmers target markets for

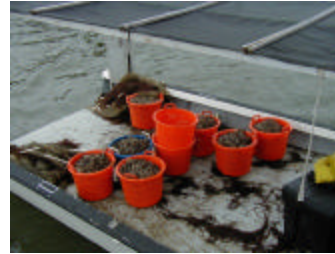
7/8 inch and 1 inch clams. During the closure planted hard clams continued to grow and are now larger than their target market size.

- The extra seven months added a mortality factor. Area farmers estimate they have lost 15 to 20 percent of their planted clams (clams that would have been sold).
- Buyers switched to other sources during the seven months and many of the farmers have been unable to re-establish a business relationship.

The practical result is that now that farmers can sell again they have a larger product of less value and buyers are savvy enough to recognize their dilemma. In addition, hard clams in this region usually do not survive through a second summer of growth. As a result, farmers are selling about 25 to 50 percent less of the total inventory they would

like to sell at prices depressed by the national economy to buyers that know the farmers must move all their remaining product before July. As one farmer characterized this situation, "it is like starting

[finding buyers] ten years ago" and "I can't make up the losses by working harder because there is no demand."



The summary impact, beyond income, is bleak. It is estimated that greater than 50 percent of the farms are in trouble.

Many could not repay loans taken on to expand farming or processing/marketing infrastructure prior to the closure. Farmers are not buying seed for lack of funds. The Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program applications will not be paid for at least a year. The area will be experiencing bankruptcies and lease sales.

### *Division of Aquaculture*

The Division of Aquaculture's primary responsibilities include certifying all legitimate aquaculturists through an annual registration, implementing a program of Aquaculture Best Management Practices to meet the State of Florida's environmental goals, managing 1.4 million acres of coastal waters for the harvest or culture of wholesome shellfish, implementing the National Shellfish Sanitation Program through periodic inspection of shellfish processing plants and product, and issuing submerged sovereign land leases for the culture of shellfish or live rock.

The aquaculture and shellfish industry can acquire assistance through a variety of means. The Division can be contacted by telephone, 850-488-4033 and 488-5471, or fax 850-410-0893. Tallahassee and the seven state offices are open five days a week from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Offices are located in Apalachicola, Bartow, Cedar Key, Murdock, Palm Bay, Panama City and Titusville. Internet users can visit the Division's web site at <http://www.FloridaAquaculture.com> for industry and program information.

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