



TERRY L. RHODES, COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE

florida aquaculture

Meet the New Commissioner

Terry L. Rhodes has become Florida's ninth Commissioner of Agriculture following her appointment to this Cabinet post by Governor Jeb Bush. Commissioner Rhodes has worked for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services since 1988, serving as the assistant director of administration before being appointed Assistant Commissioner. Prior to that, she worked as the Department's chief of personnel management and as an employee relations coordinator and training administrator.

"Terry has been with the Department of Agriculture for more than 13 years. She's well-respected and has dealt with every aspect of the services they provide to the citizens of Florida," said Governor Bush. "During this interim period, Terry will bring much-needed continuity and stability to the department and the

people of Florida, as the state continues to deal with important, ongoing issues such as citrus canker and wildfire threats."

As the Commissioner, Rhodes will direct the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' statewide efforts to safeguard the public and support Florida's agricultural economy through: the inspection and testing of food commodities; consumer protection programs aimed to reduce unfair and deceptive business practices; assisting Florida's farmers and agricultural industries with the production and promotion of agricultural products; and conserving and protecting the state's agricultural and natural resources by reducing wildfires and managing public lands.

"I am honored that the Governor has the
(Continued on page 2)

Sturgeon Culture Risk Assessment Published

The Division organized a two-day workshop in April 2000 to assess the risks of culturing sturgeon in Florida. The results of the workshop were used to develop appropriate aquaculture Best Management Practices and provided information during the process to gain permission to culture Atlantic sturgeon. The Division has just published a 330-page workshop proceedings. It is available as a hard copy or via the web as a .pdf document. Contact Ceda Rudd, 850/488-4033 or ruddc@doacs.state.fl.us, for a hard copy or visit the Division's web site, <http://www.FloridaAquaculture.com>, to read or download a copy.



Gulf sturgeon

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confidence in me to make this appointment," said Commissioner Terry Rhodes. "It is my intention to make this transition as seamless as possible by continuing to assist agricultural producers wherever and whenever we can, to aggressively combat wildfires, and to carry on with the consumer protection programs we have in place."

Commissioner Rhodes has a strong interest in Florida aquaculture and a keen interest in the programs of the Division of Aquaculture. She has been particularly interested in the development of the aquaculture Best Management Practices and the continued success of that program. As an avid aquarium hobbyist she maintains a sizable collection of African cichlids in her 180-gallon aquarium.

Toll-Free Shellfish Number Changes

The toll-free automated shellfish information telephone line was changed on February 15. To provide a regionalized and timely service, the open or closed status is now available 24-hours each day from each field office and the Division's web site. Please save the following phone numbers and bookmark the Division's web site for future reference.



Panama City Field Office (850/747-5252) for shellfish areas from Pensacola Bay in Escambia County to East Bay in Bay County.

Apalachicola Field Office (850/653-8317) from St. Joseph Bay to Wakulla County.

Cedar Key Field Office (352/543-5181) for Horseshoe Beach shellfish areas in Dixie and Citrus Counties.

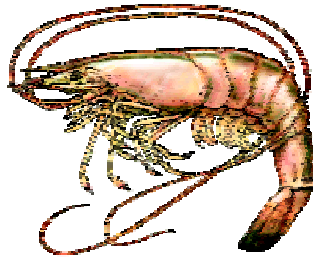
Murdock Field Office (941/255-7405) for shellfish areas from Boca Ciega Bay in Pinellas County to the Ten Thousand Islands in Collier County.

Palm Bay Field Office (321/984-4890) for all shellfish areas on the Atlantic coast from the Tolomato River in St. Johns County to the Fort Pierce Inlet in St. Lucie County.

The open or closed status of shellfish areas is also available on the Division's web site: <http://www.FloridaAquaculture.com>. For additional information, please contact Bob Thompson, 850/488-5471 or thompsrl@doacs.state.fl.us.

Register for Shrimp School 2001

The Aquatic Food Products Program will conduct their annual Shrimp School May 22-24 at the University of Florida in Gainesville. The 2001 program includes training with sensory indicators for shrimp decomposition, filth analysis, hands-on training with automated monitoring for quality and ammonia, discussion on *Salmonella* in shrimp, methods to determine phosphates and sulfites residuals, Sanitation Control Procedures with monitoring methods, and a standardized cook retention test for yields. Training will be conducted by experienced speakers from University of Florida, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, US Food and Drug Administration, National Fisheries Institute and the private industry. The training will combine lectures with daily laboratory experience and demonstrations. This program is useful for experienced and new suppliers, processors, importers, exporters, inspectors and other private sectors, including expertise from management through production. For additional information call Laura Garrido at 352/392-1991 extension 308 or visit <http://shrimpschool.ifas.ufl.edu>.



ISSC Targets *Vibrio* Enforcement

The Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference Executive Board met in January and will soon be contacting southern states that experience elevated levels of *Vibrio vulnificus* during the warm months. The Executive Board intends to emphasize enforcement of the time/temperature requirements described in the Model Shellfish Ordinance for harvesters and processors.

In particular, harvesters can expect increased efforts to enforce on-board shading of harvested oysters and the harvest-to-dock time limits. Shellfish processors can ex-

pect state and federal emphasis on HACCP records, especially time/temperature information, and the use of temperature recording devices on interstate shipment of shellstock oysters. The Division is presently locating money to assist the industry in meeting some of the new requirements.

Please contact David Heil, 850/488-5471, with questions. Please contact Victor Garrido, 352/392-1991 extension 305, for one-on-one assistance to meet these requirements in addition to product handling, time/temperature, HACCP and Model Shellfish Ordinance information.

Atlantic Sturgeon Approved for Culture

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved an amendment to their Atlantic Sturgeon Fishery Management Plan to allow the import and commercial culture of non-U.S. origin Atlantic sturgeon aquaculture. Throughout the 15 states (Maine to Florida) represented by the Commission there exists a moratorium on Atlantic sturgeon harvest or possession.

Approval of an exemption to the moratorium came following a lengthy review of a Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services request submitted in January, 2000. The review included public hearings in Portland Maine, East Sausset New York and Atlantic Beach Florida. Support for the

exemption was strong throughout the process. Critics opposed the exemption based on the: 1) vague nature of Flor-

ida's aquaculture best management practices, 2) potential adverse impacts on wild populations, 3) impact of broodstock removal on Canadian stocks, and 4) uncertain future of wild Atlantic sturgeon.



Rokaviar, Inc. cultures bester and sterlet sturgeon in tanks.

The Department must now develop and submit an implementation plan to the Commission by the end of April. An Atlantic Sturgeon Technical Committee and Management Board will evaluate the management plan. For additional information contact Mark Berrigan, 850/488-4033, or visit the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission web site at <http://www.asmf.org>.

EPA Officials Tour Ornamental Fish Farms

Mike Clipper and Kristen Strellec from the Environmental Protection Agency, John Hockheimer from Tetra Tech and Maureen Kaplan of Eastern Research Group attended a two-day tour of Florida's ornamental fish industry. These officials are involved in the current aquaculture effluent rulemaking process. The visit was arranged by the Division to give the regulators a practical look at the industry stressing the quality and quantity of water used by these facilities.

Five farms and the Tropical Aquaculture Lab were visited over the two days. The EPA and their contractors took copious notes on what they saw. Farmers from Interstate Tropical Fish Hatchery, Ekk-Will Waterlife Resources, Norton's Tampa Bay Fisheries, Angels Hatchery and Lebaco Enterprises all did a great job of articulating the details of their facilities and were open and honest about all aspects of their operation. All of them discussed the move to Best Management Practices for aquaculture and how BMPs have improved the regulatory process.

Important observations for the EPA included the small amount of feed used daily on farms, habitat created for endangered species and other animals, how little water is added to ponds when they are filled via seepage from a ditch system surrounding the ponds, a short list of all the approved drugs



Paul Radice discusses his farm's operation with EPA officials, contractors and extension agent Chris Brooks.

and chemicals and the *small* amounts of waste.

There is no word yet from the EPA on the nature of the rules that may be put in place. Aquaculture effluent rules are expected to be ready in draft form by June 2002 and a final rule in place in June 2004. For information contact Karen Metcalf 850/488-4033 or metcalk@doacs.state.fl.us.

Health and Bivalve BMPs

The Division held two workshops on the revision of the *Aquaculture Best Management Practices Manual*. Revisions to two BMPs were presented: Health Management and Marine Bivalves (Site Selection).

Health certificates are not a new idea but have been required over the years by a variety of States. The tropical fish industry, University of Florida-Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory and Divisions of Animal Industry and Aquaculture representatives developed changes to the Health Management BMP that will be promoted as an alternative to health certificates throughout the United States. The final version of this BMP will be introduced during the annual meeting of the Southern Animal Health Association (13 southern states and Puerto Rico) during June in Orlando.

A sister state agency has requested that the Division assume responsibility for dock construction related to aquacultural facilities. BMP language has been developed to take the place of current permitting requirements within the Marine Bivalves BMP.

Renewing Saltwater Product Licenses

Aquaculturists that hold a Saltwater Products License with Restricted Species Endorsement can apply the sales of their marine aquaculture products towards license and endorsement renewal. Chapter 370.26 (1) (c), Florida Statutes, states, in part, "To renew an existing restricted species endorsement, marine aquaculture producers possessing a valid saltwater products license with a restricted species endorsement may apply income from the sales of marine aquaculture products to licensed wholesale dealers. Income from the sales of marine aquaculture products shall not be eligible for the purpose of acquiring a new restricted species endorsement."

Aquaculturists can prove income from the sale of marine aquaculture products by using any of the following documents: trip tickets, notarized CPA financial statements, IRS income tax documents or a summary of annual sales provided by licensed wholesale dealers. Licensed wholesale dealer sales reports must include the dealer's wholesale number and business identification and location information (name, address and phone). The further information contact Ms. Catina Baker, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, 850/487-3122.

Division of Aquaculture

The Division of Aquaculture is the newest division within the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and was created by the Florida Legislature in 1998. Primary responsibilities include managing 1.5 million acres of coastal waters for the harvest or culture wholesome shellfish, implementing the National Shellfish Sanitation Program through periodic inspection of shellfish processing plants and product, issuing submerged sovereign land leases for the culture shellfish or live rock, certifying all legitimate aquaculturists through an annual registration and implementing a program of aquaculture Best Management Practices to meet the State of Florida's environmental goals.

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

Florida Department of Agriculture and
Consumer Services
Division of Aquaculture
1203 Governor's Square Blvd., 5th Floor
Tallahassee, FL 32301
www.FloridaAquaculture.com

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