

# FLORIDA AQUACULTURE

Issue Number 40

May 2005

## FLORIDA OYSTERS AND ORNAMENTAL FISH CAUGHT IN TRADE CROSS-FIRE

A weaker U.S. dollar against many foreign currencies, including the Euro, is fueling an export boom. The March 2005 issue of *Aquaculture Outlook* published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, noted that 2004 marked a second year of increased oyster and clam exports. The quantity of exported oysters was up 29 percent over 2003 to 7.5 million pounds with a value increase of 33 percent to \$17.2 million. The quantity of clams increased 44 percent to 5.8 million pounds with value up 35 percent to \$10.9 million. Exports of U.S. ornamental fish were also up for the third year in a row but at a more modest increase of 2 percent and value of \$8.7 million.

The good news common to all three products is that Florida is the largest producer of hard clams

and ornamental fish and an important producer of oysters.

The bad news is that the largest trading partner in these products is Canada. Based on the total value of each exported product, Canada imported 66 percent of all oysters, 81 percent of all clams, and 46 percent of all ornamental fish.

The reason this is bad news is that Canada, in response to a U.S. law entitled, *Continued Dumping and Subsidy Offset Act* (commonly called the Byrd Amendment), has imposed a 15 percent surtax on U.S. oysters and ornamental fish (amongst other products) starting May 1, 2005.

The Byrd Amendment allows U.S. producers to receive anti-dumping and countervailing duties from foreign competitors that have been judged to be

selling products below market value rather than those funds being retained by the U.S. Government. Canada and 11 other countries lodged a complaint with the World Trade Organization (WTO) protesting that U.S. companies benefit from both the imposition of anti-dumping and countervailing duties as well as direct payment of those collections. Two years ago the WTO ruled in their favor and recently authorized seven WTO members, including the European Union, to impose retaliatory measures.

For additional information, visit the *Canada Gazette* at <http://Canada.gazette.gc.ca/part1/2004/20041123-x/html/extra-e.html> and *Aquaculture Outlook* at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/so/view.asp?f=livestock/ldp-aqs/>.

### Special points of interest

- FFA experience aquaculture.
- Web-based water quality/weather reporting runs out of funds.
- "Operation No More Back Door" targets illegal seafood sales or labeling.
- Aquaculturists check your labeling!
- 2005-06 Florida Aquaculture Plan available

## FFA OFFICERS GET IN STEP WITH THE DIVISION

The Florida Future Farmers of America (FFA) State Officer team for 2004-2005 spent a day with the Division of Aquaculture getting an overview of the responsibilities of the Division. This year's officers are:

State President, Melissa Hinton - Riverview  
 State Secretary, Tori Lyons - Mayo.  
 Area 1 Vice President, Erin Stoutamire - Hosford.  
 Area 2 Vice President, Hunter Fugate - Williston.

Area 3 Vice President, Alonda McCarty - New Smyrna Beach.  
 Area 4 Vice President, Jenna Greene - Christmas.  
 Area 5 Vice President, Hope Sullenberger - Tampa.  
 Area 6 Vice President, Evie Lane - Ft Pierce.

Each year the FFA State Officers spend a week with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services learning about what all of the 13 divisions do. This year the officers spent a day in Apalachicola



learning what the Shellfish Processing Inspection Program does, seeing first hand oyster shucking and post harvest treatment of oysters, viewing the shellfish laboratory and going out on the water and trying their hand at water sampling for fecal coliforms. The group finished up their day by stopping at the Alligator Harbor Lease Area and looking at a clam lease site.

## REAL-TIME WATER QUALITY AND WEATHER MONITORING COMING TO AN END



Funding has run out to support the real-time water quality and weather monitoring stations that have been benefiting Florida hard clam farmers.

The six water quality and weather monitoring stations operating in Aquaculture Use Zones near Cedar Key, Charlotte Harbor, Pine Island, and Sebastian were supported by a three-year USDA grant that ends in December. An extended

equipment warranty and maintenance contract ends in October. Attempts to find funding to support maintenance, equipment repair, and monthly telecommunications bills have been unsuccessful. As each unit fails it will be taken off-line and dismantled.

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

## FLORIDA LEGISLATURE WORKING ON THE BUDGET

As of this writing, the Florida Legislature is working on the state budget for the 2005-2006 fiscal year. The House of Representatives passed their version of the budget and it provided for the Division of Aquaculture's base budget only. The Senate, in their budget, allocated funds for the base budget, funded the Aquaculture Review Council's three grant requests, and provided funds for one replacement vehicle. Included by both Senate and House is the funding for the Ruskin Tropical Aquaculture Lab.

Both houses of the legislature have appointed conferees who have not yet started to meet and resolve their differences. However, in the meantime, the state's Revenue Estimating Conference came out with their second quarter estimate of general revenue collected from sales tax, documentary stamps, etc., and it was approximately two billion dollars over the last estimate.

Conferees could start as early as the week of April 18<sup>th</sup> to negotiate the final budget.

As with each session the only piece of legislation that has to be passed is the budget and with May 6<sup>th</sup> being scheduled as the last day of the regular session, there is plenty of time left to work out a final budget. The Division of Aquaculture appears not be subject to any drastic cuts.

## “OPERATION NO MORE BACK DOOR” TARGETS ILLEGAL SEAFOOD SALES OR LABELING

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (DACS), Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), and Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) are stepping up efforts to keep the Sunshine State's seafood markets safe and fair. The agencies are targeting people and businesses illegally buying, selling, packaging or mislabeling seafood products in a campaign titled, "Operation No More Back Door."

Snagging fishermen or dealers illegally selling or buying their catch often requires covert operations. FWC investigators may pose as recreational fishermen and attempt to make a backdoor sale or purchase and perform DNA testing on fishery products suspected to be mislabeled. During these covert investigations, FWC officers can uncover violations that are outside the agency's purview, so they will pass that information on to DACS or DBPR for action.

DACS is sending food safety inspectors to supermarkets,

fish stores and other establishments that sell fish on the retail level to check delivery boxes for accurate labeling of fish species, according to Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles H. Bronson. Samples can be tested for species identification at the department's food lab or at FWC's facility.

At the same time, Bronson's Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement, which inspects commercial vehicles entering or leaving Florida, is scanning seafood shipment documents at DACS's interdiction stations at I-10, I-75 and I-95. The documents are accessible to the FWC and provide a snapshot of the seafood entering and leaving Florida.

DBPR reminds its licensees that all food for sale must be obtained from sources that comply with the law. "DBPR verifies that food is obtained from the proper sources during the inspection of food service establishments," said Geoff Luebke-mann, DBPR's Division of Hotels and Restaurants director. "Operators purchasing seafood products from unlicensed indi-

viduals, retailers or wholesalers are in violation of Florida law." Seafood products must be commercially and legally caught or harvested, and purchased only from licensed commercial fishermen or certified aquaculturists. Recreationally caught or harvested shellfish may not be received for sale or sold by food service establishments. Operators should also be particularly attentive to food descriptions. Any means used to promote or advertise food items for sale – including menus, "blackboard" or "specials" listings - must be accurate and truthful. Seafood species cannot legally be substituted for one another and must be accurately and truthfully promoted and sold using the correct species name.

Operation No More Back Door began in mid-February and will continue for several months. Anyone with information about these or any other resource violations can call Wildlife Alert at (888) 404-FWCC or visit MyFWC.com to report them. They may qualify for rewards.

## AQUACULTURISTS ARE REQUIRED TO LABEL PRODUCTS

Chapter 597, Florida Aquaculture Policy Act, Florida Statutes, requires identification of culture product while possessed, processed, transported or sold.

Aquaculture products shall be identified by an aquaculture certificate of registration number from harvest to point of sale. Any person who

possesses aquaculture products must show, by appropriate receipt, bill of sale, bill of lading, or other such manifest where the product originated. Marine aquaculture products shall be transported in containers that separate such product from wild stocks, and shall be identified by tags or labels that are securely attached and clearly dis-

played. Each aquaculture registrant who sells food products labeled as "aquaculture or farm raised" must have such products containerized and clearly labeled. Label information must include the name, address, and aquaculture certification number.

**CHARLES H. BRONSON  
COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE**

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*Benefiting commercial aquaculture,  
Conserving natural resources*



*Visit our web site,  
[www.FloridaAquaculture.com](http://www.FloridaAquaculture.com),  
for aquaculture, shellfish, and Division  
program information*

## 2005-06 Florida Aquaculture Plan Available on the Web

Commissioner Charles Bronson recently announced the electronic publication of the *2005-06 Florida Aquaculture Plan* saying, "The State of Florida has been a leader in aquaculture production and support for many years. Being home to exemplary producers, researchers, marketing experts and supply companies, our state has much to offer existing and prospective aquaculturists. For these reasons, I am pleased to announce the availability of the seventh edition of the *Florida Aquaculture Plan* on the World Wide Web. The *Plan* is a compilation of information about Florida aquaculture (species in culture, production systems, technological developments, and market challenges) and the public investment needed to sustain growth and development. This document serves as a planning tool to coordinate the efforts of state agencies, the public and private research community, the Legislature, and other interested parties."

Copies can be downloaded as a portable document file (.pdf) from <http://www.floridaaquaculture.com/publications/aquaplan.pdf>.

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OF AGRICULTURE AND  
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