

Florida Aquaculture

Commissioner Bronson re-elected for second term

Charles H. Bronson, a fifth-generation Floridian, was re-elected and sworn in on January 2nd as Florida's 10th Agriculture Commissioner.

Managing the largest state Department of Agriculture in the country with more than 3,700 employees, Bronson's priorities include overseeing the state's \$87 billion agriculture industry and helping promote its products, safeguarding the state's food supply, protecting consumers from unfair and deceptive trade practices, and managing about one million acres of state forests.

Initially appointed to the position in May 2001 to fulfill the unexpired term of an outgoing Commissioner, Bronson was

elected to the post in 2002, and re-elected in November 2006.

In addition to heading Florida's Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Bronson serves on the Florida Cabinet - a body that includes Florida's three statewide elected officials, as well as the Governor, and oversees state land-buying programs, clemency issues and directs the operations of several state agencies. Bronson is a member of the Governor's Council on Efficient Government and is a former President of the Southern Association of



Commissioner Bronson touring Florida tomato fields during 2006.

State Departments of Agriculture.

Born into a ranching family in Kissimmee in 1949, Bronson comes from a family that has been farming since 1635. The Commis-

sioner attended Osceola County public schools and received a Bachelor of Science degree in agricultural education and engineering, animal and meat sciences from the University of Georgia in 1972. He worked in the fertilizer, chemical and sod business and ultimately managed the family's cattle business in Central Florida.

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He was elected to the Florida Senate in 1994, representing a district that encompassed Brevard and Osceola counties, and re-elected in 1998.

Bronson resides in Tallahassee with his wife, Regina, and has two daughters Michelle and Melanie.

Exercise caution when importing live gamefish from the Great Lakes

A new strain of a highly contagious pathogen of marine and freshwater fish, Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS), was detected in the Great Lakes in 2005 and has been spreading in that region. In response the U.S. Department of Agriculture issued emergency orders identifying 37 susceptible fish species and prohibiting their movement as live

products from eight Great Lake states (IL, IN, MI, MN, NY, OH, PA, WI) and two Canadian provinces (Ontario and Quebec). Several of the susceptible species are found or grown in the Southeast and Florida: black crappie, bluegill, brown bullhead, channel catfish, largemouth bass, pumpkinseed, and white bass. VHS occurs in

water temperatures that range from 35 degrees F to 54 degrees F (2 to 12 degrees C) so infection of Florida fish, wild or on the farm, is highly unlikely. However, be aware that during prolonged winter cold fronts, certain water bodies in Florida may reach temperatures in the low 50s, especially in the Panhandle. Therefore,

as protective measures farmers purchasing VHS susceptible live fish from the Great Lake region should: 1) request a health inspection stating the fish have been tested and are free of VHS prior to shipment, and 2) stay alert for more VHS information by visiting <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/aqua/> or contacting your aquatic animal health professional.

Division forms apple snail task force

Exotic apple snails (family Ampullariidae) have been established in Florida since the 1950s and are common to the southern portion of the peninsula with scattered populations in the northern portion. One particular species, the spike-topped apple snail, is a valuable aquacultural product.

Up until recently there has been little agency, scientific, or public concern about exotic apple snails; however, recent media reports indicate dense, localized populations may have caused negative impacts of native and exotic aquatic plants; genetic evaluation of exotic apple snails in Florida casts doubt on the generally accepted taxonomic identifications currently used by local, state and federal agencies; international reports describe extensive damage by exotic



P. insularum collected from Lake Munson near Tallahassee.

apple snails to wetland rice production; and, a parasitic nematode with potential human health impacts utilizes freshwater molluscs, including apple snails, as an intermediate host.

To resolve these issues the Division formed a Task Force to provide to the Commissioner of Agriculture an analysis of the economic, human health, and ecological risks posed by exotic apple snails established in Florida and recommend prevention, management and control options to counter those risks.

Knowledgeable experts from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida International University, Florida Tropical Fish Farmers Association, Florida Department of Health, The Nature Conservancy, University of Florida,

University of West Florida, and the Department's divisions of Aquaculture and Plant Industry were convened by Sherman Wilhelm, Director, Division of Aquaculture.

Their initial meeting concerned taxonomy, field identification, and current laboratory and field research efforts. Based upon soon to be published work from the Florida International University, four species of exotic apple snails occur in the state: *Pomacea insularum*, *P. canaliculata*, *P. haustrom*, and *P. diffusa*.

As outcomes of their first meeting: the Commission will update an apple snail identification card with images provided by Task Force members; members will cooperate to establish statewide sampling to assist Florida International University in its genetic analysis; and a project proposal to quantify ecological effects will be led by the University of West Florida.

Floridians favor Florida agriculture

The Agriculture Institute of Florida completed a survey to gauge the attitudes of Florida residents on the agriculture industry. The University of Florida conducted a statewide survey September 5-15, 2006 of more than 300 registered voters in Florida.

Some notable findings were:

- When asked about their overall opinion of Florida agriculture, 80% of the respondents had a favorable response. Only 14% were unsure.
- 98% of the people surveyed believe agriculture is important to Florida's economy.



- When asked which industry is most important to Florida's economy, 49% of respondents ranked agriculture as the second most important behind tourism.

Nearly 65% of those surveyed believe foods produced in Florida offer benefits over foods produced in other areas. The top three benefits cited were: helping the local economy (48%), freshness (44%), and quality (24%).

- Higher food cost was cited by 68% of the respondents as being very likely to occur if Florida agriculture production were significantly reduced. Also cited as being very likely to occur was more foreign-

produced food in stores (64%), limited availability of certain foods (46%), and lower food quality (40%).

- More than 82% of those surveyed are confident that farming is safe for the environment, with only 11% citing a lack of confidence.

Florida agriculture contributes more than \$87 billion annually to Florida's economy, directly and indirectly, and employs about 757,000 people. The Institute is a group of agricultural communicators representing Florida's commodity groups and agricultural corporations.

For more information, visit <http://www.aiflorida.org>.

National partnership works for drug approvals

The Aquatic Animal Drug Approval Partnership (AADAP) was established within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Fish Hatchery System in January 2003. The goal is to ensure continued progress towards obtaining U.S. Food and Drug Administration-approved and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-compliant new animal drug approvals for use in public and private aquacul-



ture programs throughout the United States.

AADAP is a broad, partner-based program of over 80 Federal, State, Tribal and/or private agencies or organizations. The AADAP helps to lead a coordinated national effort to generate data, analyze results, compile final study reports, disseminate information and data, and manage all other aspects of requisite data submissions to FDA

in support of new animal drug approvals for aquatic species.

The Partnership is supported by an excellent web site, <http://www.fws.gov/fisheries/aadap/>, that includes information concerning current information, approved drugs and chemicals, drug approval process, ongoing drug and chemical applications, usage guidance, and upcoming meetings.

Florida shellfish program conforms with national standards

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) annually evaluates the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Service's (DACS) shellfish program for conformance with the National Shellfish Sanitation Program Model Ordinance. The 2006 Florida Annual Program Evaluation Report included the following FDA findings.

Growing Area Classification Element: Twelve growing areas were randomly selected for evaluation. A comprehensive review of the Sanitary Survey, Triennial Reevaluation, and Annual Update Reports was conducted. Field visits to these growing areas were conducted to verify sanitary survey report classifi-

cations, sample station locations, and identified pollution sources.

Status: The Growing Area Classification Element meets the requirements of the National Shellfish Sanitation Program Model Ordinance. All deficiencies have been adequately addressed.

Processing and Shipping Element and Standardization: Thirteen shellfish processing plants were randomly selected for evaluation. A comprehensive review of the inspection reports for the past two years was undertaken, and joint FDA/DACS inspections were conducted at the selected processing firms.

Status: The Processing and Shipping Element meets the requirements of the National Shellfish Sanitation Program Model Ordinance. No administrative deficiencies were cited during the evaluation.

Laboratory Element: The Apalachicola Shellfish Laboratory was not evaluated. The shellfish lab and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Toxin Analysis Laboratory in St. Petersburg were found to be in the "Conforming" status during the FDA evaluation in Fiscal Year 2005.

Contact David Heil, 850-488-4033 or heid@doacs.state.fl.us, for additional information or to answer questions.



Seafood and aquaculture members of the Florida Agriculture Promotional Campaign (FAPC) are eligible to participate in the *Fresh from Florida* Logo Incentive Program through March 31st.

The purpose of the program is to provide participating agricultural entities with the opportunity

Fresh from Florida LOGO INCENTIVE PROGRAM

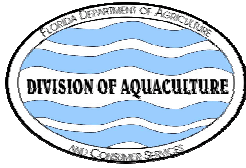
to offset a portion of their consumer packaging and carton printing costs while promoting the *Fresh from Florida* message. If you are not currently an FAPC member, you will need to apply for membership prior to participating.

For information about becoming an FAPC member or the Logo Incentive Program, contact the

Bureau of Seafood and Aquaculture Marketing, 850-488-0163. You can also access details about the program and download an application to participate by visiting http://www.florida-agriculture.com/marketing/logo_incentive.htm.



Charles H. Bronson
Commissioner of Agriculture



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