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# FLORIDA AQUACULTURE

**Charles H. Bronson, Commissioner of Agriculture  
Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services**

## COMMISSIONER BRONSON RETIRES AFTER LONG, DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

Commissioner Charles H. Bronson's tenure as Florida Commissioner of Agriculture will end on January 4, 2011. His term as Commissioner has been remarkable for aquaculture. In his nine years, Florida has had the worst back-to-back hurricane seasons in memory, one of the longest cold spell, and the worst oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Yet, under his leadership Florida aquaculture has received for the first time ever, over \$4 million in federal aquaculture disaster payments and \$7.4 million in federal oyster reef restoration funds.

Under the aquaculture federal disaster payments, 169 farmers were able to take advantage of those funds to reimburse costs associated with several different disasters. Federal oyster funds

have been used to plant cultch material from Cedar Key to Pensacola, fund the four county oyster relay program, purchase a brand new barge to build oyster reefs, and create a new commercial boat landing facility in Franklin County.

Commissioner Bronson has been a consistent friend to aquaculture. During very difficult economic times for the State of Florida and its citizens, he held submerged lands lease fees at current levels, supported funding for

the University of Florida Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory, resisted cuts in personnel and services throughout the Department, and testified repeatedly in support of Florida agriculture at state

budgetary hearings. Throughout the Gulf oil spill the Commissioner repeatedly reminded BP about the value and importance of Florida seafood and the absolute necessity of assuring the public that Florida seafood is safe, nutritious and delicious.



Commissioner Bronson explaining the value of agricultural employment during a 2009 news conference.

Commissioner Bronson appeared in print, radio and TV spots declaring that Florida seafood is safe and successfully acquired BP funding to expand the Department's food safety and seafood marketing efforts.

The Commissioner's farming roots extend back to 1635 as the son of a family that has raised sod, cattle and citrus in Florida, as a state senator that represented an agricultural district, and as chair of both the Senate's agriculture and natural resources committees.

Please join us in wishing Commissioner Bronson a long and healthy retirement doing what he loves to do the most: hunting and fishing.

Image courtesy the Florida Memory Project, State Library and Archives of Florida.

## BRONSON ANNOUNCES \$20 MILLION FROM BP TO FUND SEAFOOD SAFETY, MARKETING

Commissioner Charles H. Bronson announced October 25, 2010 that BP will pay \$20 million to his Department over the next three years to help fund enhanced seafood inspections and marketing efforts aimed at restoring public confidence in the safety of Gulf of Mexico seafood.

Today's agreement comes just over three months after the Commissioner sent a letter to BP President Bob Dudley outlining the added

costs his Department will incur in the years to come to assure the safety of Gulf seafood and to restore consumer confidence in Gulf seafood.

The letter was accompanied by a comprehensive food safety plan that detailed equipment that would be needed and tests that would have to be conducted to ensure that no lingering oil residues or chemical dispersants are present on the dozens of species of Gulf

seafood harvested or cultured by Floridians, including shrimp, crabs, oysters, clams, and finfish.

"We are grateful to BP for its responsiveness to our request and feel confident that these funds will go a long way toward assuring the safety of seafood harvested in Florida waters and in restoring consumer confidence in our seafood products," Bronson said.

Although the agreement that Bronson reached with BP provides that the company will

furnish \$10 million for seafood testing and \$10 million for marketing over the next three years, a clause in the agreement specifies a three-year extension should state or federal waters contiguous to Florida have to be closed to seafood harvesting as a result of lingering oil spill contaminants.

In his initial letter to BP, Bronson requested \$59 million to address efforts during the next 10 years, but the letter was sent in July the same week that

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## FLORIDA AQUACULTURE

### DEP PROPOSES PESTICIDE GENERAL PERMIT

On January 7, 2009, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court canceled an EPA rule that exempted pesticide applications to surface waters from the need to obtain National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits under the Clean Water Act. On June 8, 2009, the Court established April 9, 2011 as the effective date to establish a permit.

On June 4, 2010, the EPA published a draft NPDES General Permit for pollutant discharges from the application of pesticides that will be applicable in unauthorized states and tribal lands. Authorized states, like Florida, are required to have an NPDES pesticides program in place and issue permits by the April 9, 2011 court deadline.

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) held



five workshops across Florida from October 20th to 29th to introduce their draft pesticide general permit.

The draft permit is focused on large users and four broad categories of pesticide application: mosquitoes and flying insects, aquatic weed and algae control, aquatic nuisance animal control, or forest canopy and other area wide pest control

Large-scale users were identified as being the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Department of Transportation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Water Management

Districts, or mosquito control districts. These large users will file a Notice of Intent (NOI) to comply with the conditions of the draft general permit. All other pesticide users are automatically covered by this permit, meaning that aquaculture facilities do not have to submit an NOI.

In addition, individuals or businesses that are already under permit as required by the Clean Water Act as point sources, e.g., aquaculture, are essentially already regulated and do not have to submit a NOI because pesticide use, storage, handling are already a component of their current regulatory program. For aquaculturists the Aquaculture Certificate of Registration and aquaculture BMPs include agrichemical requirements and comprise a "permit" created under the authority of the Clean Water Act and Florida

statutes.

DEP is planning, after the public comment period closes on November 30, 2011, to submit their draft rule and permit to EPA for their comment in December. DEP expects to receive an EPA response in January. Depending upon the EPA response, the Division of Aquaculture may revise the aquaculture BMPs to include the technical-based effluent limitations mentioned in the draft general permit to insure that there is no doubt that aquafarms holding an Aquaculture Certificate of Registration can use pesticides on their farm.

For more information, contact Paul Zajicek, 850-488-4033 or zajicep@doacs.state.fl.us.

### USDA AWARDS 2009 HIGH FEED COST GRANT

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has authorized \$20 million for a 2009 Aquaculture Grant Program. Commissioner Bronson signed an agreement on September 23, 2010 with USDA to distribute Florida's share of the grant, \$238,170, to Florida aquaculturists that suffered financial losses associated with high feed costs during 2009.

Current Aquaculture Certificate of Registration holders that were registered in 2009 and were producing shrimp, alligator, ornamental fish, sturgeon, tilapia, hybrid striped bass, catfish, or turtles will receive a grant appli-

cation. Producers will have to provide documentation (paid invoices or receipts or a notarized statement from their feed supplier) that their feed costs were 25% greater than the previous five year average and that feed represents 25% of their annual production costs.

Applicants will have 30 days to complete and return the application. The Division will have 30 days to review applications for eligibility, accuracy, prove supporting documentation, and to approve an application for disbursement.

For additional information, contact Kal Knickerbocker at 850-488-4033.

### \$20 MILLION FROM BP (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

the well was capped but not permanently sealed. There were concerns at that time that more oil would reach Florida waters. However, at no time has oil or oil spill related contaminants affected the wholesomeness of Florida seafood.

The Commissioner has repeatedly stated, "The commercial seafood industry is important to our state, and we want consumers to know that they can buy Florida seafood with confidence."

With a clause in the agreement assuring that funding could be



extended if warranted, Bronson said he is confident that the agreement will fully protect Florida.

"We believe this agreement is good for our citizens, good for both our aquaculture and commercial and recreational fishing industries and positive news for everyone who enjoys our seafood," Bronson said.

## BE ALERT: LIONFISH ARE SPREADING INTO FLORIDA'S COASTAL WATERS

The nonnative Indo-Pacific red lionfish is spreading throughout the South Atlantic, Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico and is common to Southeast Florida and Florida Keys reef tracts. Fish have also been found in the Gulf of Mexico 16 miles off of Ft. Walton Beach and 10 miles west of Bradenton. Within its native range the lionfish occurs in shallow inshore waters



to depths of several hundred feet.

A sting from the lionfish constitutes a serious health emergency. Localized symptoms include, but are not limited to, persistent, intense, throbbing, radiating, sharp pain at the site of wound, tingling sensations, sweating, and blistering.

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The worst cases may cause systemic repercussions including headache, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, delirium, seizures, paralysis of limbs, a rise or drop in blood pressure, respiratory distress, heart complications including congestive heart failure, pulmonary edema, tremors, muscle weakness, and loss of consciousness.

Basic treatment includes removing broken spine (if present and possible), compression to stop or control

bleeding, immersing the afflicted area in hot but not scalding water (no hotter than 100 - 110°F) for 15 to 20 minutes, and seek professional medical attention as soon as possible. Call, toll-free, the Aquatic Toxins Hotline, 888-232-8635, for medical advice.

Information provided by the USGS Aquatic Nuisance Species Database, Florida Museum of Natural History, NOAA, and the Florida Poison Information Center. Image courtesy the Cayman Islands Department of Environment and Claudia Neuner.

## FLORIDA'S ECONOMIC OUTLOOK BY THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC & DEMOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Until three years ago, Florida was one of the nation's fastest growing states. With the end of the housing boom and the beginning of the real estate market correction, the state experienced no growth. Below is a summary of financial health indicators that predict state economic performance.

**Personal income growth** (salary and wages) is a good short-term measure of the economy. Florida has a mixed record: two quarters of negative growth and three weakly positive. An increase of 0.8% in the first quarter of 2010 ranked Florida 35th in the country.

Florida's **job growth** was worse than the national averages until July when Florida experienced its first over-the-year increase since June 2007. However, Florida is still 831,600 jobs below its peak during the boom. At the current pace, a full recovery will not occur until 2014.

The state's **unemployment rate** in July was 11.5%, persis-

tently staying higher than the national rate of 9.5%. Even more troublesome, 49 of Florida's 67 counties had double-digit unemployment rates. For the second year in a row, the only sector to gain jobs was Education & Health Services. Virtually all of the increase was due to health services, primarily in ambulatory health care services.

For Florida, it appears that the extreme financial and economic stress experienced over the last few years reached its bottom sometime during the spring of 2010. Months of modest growth are expected before full recovery begins in earnest in the spring of 2011.

The following discussion consists of additional economic recovery predictions.

**Employment Conditions Retreating from High Levels of Distress...** According to the latest nationwide data, Florida's annual job growth rate of +0.04% in

July is matching and slightly better than the national jobs picture. Overall employment is projected to gain 1.1% in Fiscal Year 2010-11 and then increase by 2.1% in Fiscal Year 2011-12, 2.9% in Fiscal Year 2012-13, and 2.4% in 2013-14.

Florida's long-term growth prospects mimic the national forecast; however, Florida's average annual wages largely fall below the nation as a whole. In 2009, the state's average annual wage for all industries was 89.9% of the national average.

**Construction Continues to Drag...** Based on the most recent data, the **excess** supply of unsold Florida homes is approaching 450,000. The state will need significant time to work off the current excess – at least until the end of the 2011 (halfway through Fiscal Year 2011-12), and likely longer.

In 2008, the median price of an existing home declined 20% and in 2009, it declined

another 24%. To date, 2010 is averaging a decline of 3%. The inventory of unsold homes suggests that prices will continue to fall or stay relatively flat through most of 2011.

**Population Growth Slower But Steady...** Over 80% of the state's population growth comes from positive net migration, primarily from people moving into Florida from other states. People are reluctant to move during recessions because of the inability to sell their homes, and the difficulty in finding new jobs.

During 2011, population growth is expected to reflect the state's natural increase (positive births minus deaths) with 77,492 new residents. The extremely low rate of growth over the past few years is unprecedented in Florida's modern history.

For the full report, visit <http://edr.state.fl.us/> and click on Economic Estimating Conference.

**CHARLES H. BRONSON, COMMISSIONER  
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### **Mission**

Regulating and supporting aquaculture production and growth for economic development while protecting the environment.

**OFFICE OF AGRICULTURAL LAW  
ENFORCEMENT  
TOLL-FREE: 800-342-5869**

## **INCREASED FIRE DANGER PREDICTED FOR 2011**

Currently, Florida is experiencing La Niña conditions, and this La Niña is expected to continue through at least early 2011. The potential for an abnormally warm and dry winter in Florida during La Niña episodes could set the stage for greater than normal wildfire activity in 2011. This potential could be compounded in areas that are already abnormally dry or experiencing moderate drought.

Protect your home and farm by becoming *firewise*. Visit [http://www.fl-dof.com/wildfire/firewise\\_index.html](http://www.fl-dof.com/wildfire/firewise_index.html) or call the Bureau of Forest Protection at 850-488-6111.

# **WANTED ARSONIST!**



Everyone loses when wildland arsonists strike!  
**IF YOU HAVE INFORMATION ABOUT A  
WILDLAND FIRE BELIEVED TO BE SET BY AN**

**ARSONIST**

**CALL THE FLORIDA DIVISION OF FORESTRY AT**

**1-800-342-5869**

**CALLER MAY REMAIN ANONYMOUS  
UP TO**

**\$5,000 REWARD**

**FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO AN ARREST**

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