

Coastal Markers



Volume 7, Issue 1

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

Summer 2003

Shrimp Season opens with 1,067 boats

Shrimp season, which officially opened in Mississippi territorial waters at 6 a.m.

June 10, brought with it an increase in the number of commercial vessels, possibly due to favorable weather

conditions. More than a thousand shrimp boats came out to work on opening day.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) marine fisheries staff completed an aerial survey of the shrimp boats on opening day and observed an increase in the number of shrimp boats: 1,067 shrimp boats this year compared to 1,017 shrimp boats last year. The majority



DMR Marine Patrol Officer Andy Ryals patrolls the waters south of Horn Island June 10 during opening day of shrimp season in Mississippi.

of boats were congregated north of Cat Island. Prior to the season opening, the DMR's Marine Patrol issued 18 citations for shrimping during closed season.

The DMR's Marine Patrol was out in full

force starting at 4:30 a.m. June 10 and worked 'round the clock to ensure a smooth shrimp season opening. This included 28 officers, two reserve officers and two dispatchers. Marine Patrol officers conducted patrols from 11 patrol boats throughout the Mississippi Sound. Marine Patrol made seven arrests on opening day and responded to six boat sinkings—none resulting in death or injury.

"The compliance rate was exceptionally good," said George J. Wright, Sr., acting Chief of Enforcement of the DMR's Marine Patrol. "This was mainly due to the fishermen and the large volume of enforcement out on the water. Law enforcement was extremely pleased with the fishermen's compliance with the rules and regulations of the fishing industry."



Shrimpers apply for federal relief funds

More than 350 people applied at the DMR for their share of the \$1,003,307 Congressional Fisheries Disaster Relief Fund. Gov. Ronnie Musgrove announced in May how Mississippi's portion of the federal fund would be disbursed.

In February 2003, Congress appropriated \$35 million in funds to aid the shrimping industry, which has been hard hit by declining prices due to the increasing amount and low price of imported shrimp and higher operating costs. Funds were allotted to states based on the volume of shrimp produced by each state. Mississippi's portion of the \$17.5 million allotted for the Gulf of Mexico states is about \$1 million.

Upon application, the DMR will distribute: • 2 percent of funds to fishermen with a demonstrated record of compliance with Turtle Excluder Device (TED) and Bycatch Reduc-



DMR marine fisheries biologist Bill Richardson (left) records information on Lien Nguyen's (right) application for the shrimp fishery disaster relief fund.

tion Device (BRD) regulations; • 90 percent of funds to shrimp vessel owners, captains and fishermen; and • 8 percent of funds to related businesses (including deckhands and net makers), shrimp marketing, and funding for TED and BRD technology transfer, including in-

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Coastal Markers is a publication of the



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Director's Notes

Dr. William Walker



As you might already have noticed by the left and feel of this edition, Coastal Markers has been expanded by nearly 50 percent. The new, expanded format not only allows us to increase the size of photographs and graphics but also gives us the opportunity to provide you with even more information about the marine resources of the Mississippi Gulf Coast and the folks responsible for managing them.

One of the most important aspects of common property management involves providing information to and obtaining feedback from the primary user groups of the resources being managed. In our case, those user groups are commercial and recreational fishermen, waterfront property owners, developers, conservation groups and people who simply call the Mississippi Gulf Coast home, like you. We value your opinion and want to make every effort to see that it is taken into consideration when making any management decision.

We accomplish the needed information exchange in a number of different ways such as through public hearings, workshops, our Comprehensive Resource Management Plan and exhibits and displays at local events. Over the years, Coastal Markers has proven itself to be one of the best vehicles the agency has to provide timely information to you, our primary customers.

If there are specific topics that you would like to see in our newsletter that have not yet already been featured in the past or if you would simply like to comment about our Coastal Markers, please drop us a line (to the attention of the Coastal Markers Editor) at 1141 Bayview Ave., Suite 101, Biloxi, MS 39530. Your suggestions are always welcomed.

Executive Director

**Boat and Water Safety Course
Schedule (July-September 2003)**

Call the DMR Boat and Water Safety Bureau at (228) 435-1332 for more details. All classes are free. Pre-registration is required.

- **July 23-24**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 2992 W. Beach Blvd., Gulfport, 6-9 p.m.
- **July 26**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 2326 Telephone Road, Pascagoula, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- **August 2**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 2326 Telephone Road, Pascagoula, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- **August 6-7**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 2992 W. Beach Blvd., Gulfport, 6-9 p.m.
- **August 9**, Bolton Building Auditorium, 1141 Bayview Ave., Biloxi, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- **August 16**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 300 U.S. 90, Bay St. Louis, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- **August 18-19**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 2326 Telephone Road, Pascagoula, 6-9 p.m.
- **August 23**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 2992 W. Beach Blvd., Gulfport, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- **August 25-26**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 300 U.S. 90, Bay St. Louis, 6-9 p.m.
- **August 27-28**, Bolton Building Auditorium, 1141 Bayview Ave., Biloxi, 6-9 p.m.
- **September 6**, Bolton Building Auditorium, 1141 Bayview Ave., Biloxi, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- **September 8-9**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 2326 Telephone Road, Pascagoula, 6-9 p.m.
- **September 13**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 2992 W. Beach Blvd., Gulfport, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- **September 17-18**, Bolton Building Auditorium, 1141 Bayview Ave., Biloxi, 6-9 p.m.
- **September 20**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 300 U.S. 90, Bay St. Louis, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- **September 22-23**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 2992 W. Beach Blvd., Gulfport, 6-9 p.m.
- **September 27**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 2326 Telephone Road, Pascagoula, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
- **September 29-30**, Mississippi Power Co. Auditorium, 300 U.S. 90, Bay St. Louis, 6-9 p.m.

A very special thanks to the following employees who contributed to this issue of Coastal Markers: Terry Bakker, Jennifer Buchanan, Karen Carron, Dr. Fred Deegen, Wesley Devers, Traci Floyd, Monica Fragello, Marcia Garcia, Stanley Hamilton, Irvin Jackson, Melanie Lane, Ruth Posadas, Dave Ruple, Amy Taylor, and Frank Wescovich.

DMR boosts oyster productivity through cultch plant

The DMR distributed about 10,000 cubic yards of cultch material (oyster shells or other suitable material that provides a clean surface for oyster larvae to attach) on Telegraph Reef and Long Beach Reef in early May. The site was selected following input from oyster harvesters, processors and on-site investigations of bottom type and other environmental factors.

The cultch plant sites included a 120-acre site about five miles south of Pass Christian and a 10-acre site about three-fourth's

of a mile south of Long Beach. These cultch plants were the final phase of a \$287,000 Oyster Habitat Restoration and Enhancement project funded by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) through the Mississippi Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP). The first phase, also funded through CIAP, included a deployment of



Cultch material is distributed on Telegraph Reef.



DMR Office Director of Coastal Ecology Jan Boyd (left), Congressman Gene Taylor (center) and DMR Executive Director Bill Walker (right) arrive on the site of the May cultch plant.

about 3,950 cubic yards

of cultch material on Telegraph Reef last fall, increasing oyster acreage by about 80 acres. CIAP is a federally sponsored program that provides money for the state and counties to address statewide coastal issues.

Additional oyster cultch plants are being planned for the fall of this year. Cultch plants are intended to enhance oyster productivity and increase fishing opportunities in south Mississippi through the continued develop-

ment of existing reefs and the creation of additional reefs.

"Cultch planting is one of the most important methods used by the DMR to enhance Mississippi's shellfish resources," said Dale Diaz, DMR marine biologist. "The oyster industry is very important to the economy of Mississippi. People who work in this industry have my respect, because this is hard work, which at times takes place in harsh environmental conditions. The only thing easy when dealing with an oyster is eating it."

Marine Patrol Col. Bakker retires



Terry Bakker

After devoting 32 years to a career in law enforcement, DMR Marine Patrol Col. Terry Bakker announced he would retire, effective June 30. Bakker has

27 years of service with the State of Mississippi and has served as Colonel since 1999.

Bakker began his career in 1971 with the Biloxi Police Department. Since then, he has worked for the Jackson County Sheriff's Department, the Mississippi Marine Conservation Commission, the Boat and Water Safety Commission and the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks (DWFP) under the Bureau of Marine Resources. In 1999, when the marine law enforcement division of the DWFP was transferred to the DMR, Bakker became colonel of Marine Patrol.

What Bakker has enjoyed most about his career in law enforcement is the camaraderie among fellow officers and the daily interaction with the public.

"My father, brother and brother-in-law were in law enforcement, and I saw the good that can come out of it by helping others in need," Bakker said.



DMR Executive Director Dr. William W. Walker (right) makes a presentation to Col. Terry Bakker (left) in recognition of his 27 years of service with the State of Mississippi during the Commission on Marine Resources' June meeting.

Bakker said that during his career, he has learned that most mistakes the public makes are not intentional and he would advise anyone entering a career in law enforcement to be patient and understanding.

"Have compassion, integrity, honesty and most of all, be loyal to your friends and superiors," Bakker said.



Oyster Season closes: 2002-2003 sack total tops last year's harvest

Mississippi public oyster reefs closed to harvest on May 24, 2003, officially ending the 2002-2003 oyster season. This season's sack total was 391,635 sacks, exceeding last season's harvest of 388,091 sacks.

Sustaining this production level requires favorable environmental conditions and the implementation of good management practices with a proactive management approach. Two such proactive methods used by the DMR are the following:

1. Cultivation— pulling unbagged dredges over existing reefs, exposing and breaking up old reefs and clusters to enhance spat set and harvesting opportunities.

2. Reef Creation — planting suitable cultch material (oyster shell) for oysters to set on in areas favorable for oyster production.

Grand Bay Reserve supporter receives national Environmental Hero Award

Clyde Brown of Moss Point, Mississippi, an active participant and local supporter of the DMR's Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (GBNERR), was named a recipient of the 2003 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Environmental Hero Award at a ceremony to dedicate a boat ramp at the reserve. Brown was recognized for his long-term efforts to protect the fragile, natural resources of Coastal Mississippi.

A life-long resident of eastern Jackson County, Mississippi, Brown is retired from nearly 40 years of employment at the International Paper Company and is a part-time oysterman and processor. He has been involved in a number of volunteer efforts that range from serving on citizen advisory councils to establishing the GBNERR.

Established in 1995 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Earth Day, the Environmental Hero award is presented to individuals and organizations who volunteer their time and energy to help NOAA carry out its mission. Brown is among only 36 winners in the nation—35 individuals and one organization—of the 2003 NOAA Environmental Hero Award.

"Clyde Brown is soft-spoken yet determined in his efforts to conserve and restore the resources of the Mississippi Gulf Coast. He serves as the pulse of the local community and has been the sounding board for local residents inquiring about



Jackson County resident Clyde Brown (left) is presented with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Environmental Hero Award by Eldon Hout, NOAA's Director of Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (right) and Nathalie Peter, Senior Project Manager of NOAA Estuarine Reserves Division (center) at the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources/Grand Bay Reserve's Bayou Heron Boat Ramp and Pier dedication ceremony on May 22, 2003.

federal and state conservation initiatives over the years. Clyde is a true environmental hero and I am proud to have had the opportunity to work with him," said David Ruple, Manager of the DMR/GBNERR.

DMR inspects live bait shrimp dealer facilities



DMR marine fisheries biologist Traci Floyd (right) inspects a live bait harvest vessel at La France Fishing Camp in Bay St. Louis.

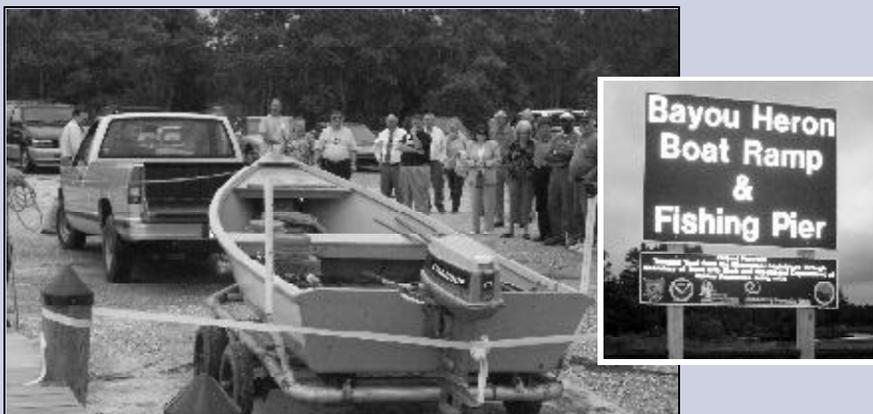
The DMR's Shrimp and Crab Bureau inspected and licensed 28 live bait shrimp dealer facilities, 28 live bait harvest vessels and 18 live bait transport vehicles during the month of May. The number of live bait shrimp dealers licensed in 2003 is down from 35 bait shrimp dealers licensed in 2002.

By law, coastwide live bait shrimp operations may be inspected and licensed annually only during the month of May. Inspections include checking that dealers have met requirements such as sufficient vessel safety gear, proper net and door sizes of trawls, and adequate facilities to keep live shrimp for sale to the public. Bait shrimp landings and sales are reported monthly to the DMR by each licensed dealer.

"Mississippi's live bait shrimp dealers provide a valuable service to the recreational fishing community by offering one of the top live bait options for landing prized sport fish," said DMR marine fisheries biologist Traci Floyd.

For a complete listing of licensed live bait shrimp dealers, contact the DMR at (228) 374-5000.

Bayou Heron Boat Ramp Dedication



Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (GBNERR) partners and community residents watch as Jackson County resident Clyde Brown makes the first ceremonial launch at the new Bayou Heron Boat Ramp and Fishing Pier facility during a dedication ceremony held May 22. The new facility is located on Bayou Heron in eastern Jackson County. The new pier and boat ramp replaces a pre-existing facility and will make the waters of the reserve more accessible to the public.

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centives for ensuring widespread and proper use of TEDs and BRDs.

The following qualifying criteria must be met by the applicant:

- A valid state approved photo identification and social security number/tax identification number;
- Mississippi commercial shrimp license in 2001 and/or 2002; and
- More than 50 percent of income from commercial shrimp fishing or a minimum of 5,000 pounds of shrimp landed in Mississippi in 2001 and/or 2002.

Bird Banding



Dr. Mark Woodrey, research coordinator/research biologist for the DMR's Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (GBNERR), bands a wood thrush netted during the DMR GBNERR and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge's one-day bird banding event on April 18, 2003.

Bird banding is a universal and indispensable technique for studying the movement, survival and behavior of birds. This collaborative banding project was presented in conjunction with the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory in Lake Jackson, Texas and was designed to demonstrate the importance of the Gulf Coast region to migratory birds and to provide a wonderful beginning for future partnerships for migratory bird research coordination throughout the Gulf of Mexico region. Seven sites participated in this international project.

Conference focused on stormwater management, national heritage



Sen. Tommy Gollott (left), Sen. Rob Smith (center) and Sen. Deborah Dawkins (right) listen to author/writer Douglas Brinkley speak about how the Mississippi River shaped American culture and heritage.

More than 250 conference participants concerned with the environmental impacts and economic growth within the six-lower county region of Coastal Mississippi attended the annual Coastal Development Strategies Conference, held May 12-14 in Bay St. Louis. The Comprehensive Resource Management Plan (CRMP) hosted the event in association with CRMP stakeholders. CRMP is a program within the DMR.

A networking golf tournament kicked off the first day of the conference. The remaining two days featured national and local speakers interacting with the participants, door prize drawings and an evening reception. Twenty-nine exhibitors displayed their products and services for conference attendees.

"This conference has evolved from a small cohesive group into a premier educational event for the region," said CRMP director Tina Shumate. "This year we had to scurry to bring in additional seating and increase the food count to meet the growing number of participants."

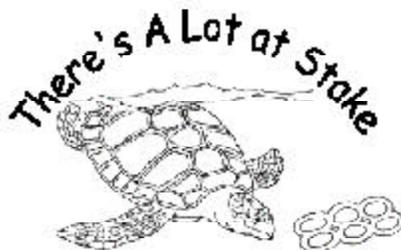
The conference focused on storm water management, smart growth projects, Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and the introduction of a new program that would assist the local communities and residents in the six-county region of Mississippi to preserve the unique cultural, historical and natural resources of the region and to achieve the national heritage area designation. Each year, the conference highlights issues affecting the globe and addresses how those impacts have spurred coastal decision-makers into exchanging information and working issues to sustain the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

Author and writer Douglas Brinkley opened the event talking about the importance of the Mississippi River and the role the river played in the making of this great nation. Other speakers included Andy Reese who spoke about nonpoint source pollution and Allen Comp, a consultant to national heritage areas, who encouraged CRMP to move forward and obtain a national heritage designation for the region. Presentations on smart growth projects, sustainable development and the risks and vulnerability of the gulf coast to hurricanes were highlighted.

"We're pleased to see the growth, interest and diversity among the group. The involvement of our elected officials is paramount for us," said Marcia Garcia, Staff Officer with CRMP. "Their involvement and support in the program and in the smart growth concepts put forth by CRMP is encouraging. We appreciate their time and presence at the conference and we appreciate the stakeholders who have contributed to the success of the program. Everyone here is important."

15th annual Mississippi Coastal Cleanup

September 20, 2003



Don't Leave Trash in
Your Wake!

For information, call (228) 374-5000
or visit www.masgc.org/cleanup

Sponsored by DMR and the Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force

Derelict crab trap removal program, Coastal Cleanup win state awards

The DMR was presented with two awards at the 11th annual Keep America Beautiful Awards Luncheon held April 24 at the Country Club of Jackson in Jackson, Miss., for its role in coordinating the annual Mississippi Coastal Cleanup and the Mississippi Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program. This is the third consecutive year the Mississippi Coastal Cleanup was recognized with an award and the second consecutive year the Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program received an award.

“The success of these programs is a direct result of the commitment of the DMR staff and of the partners, volunteers and stakeholders in the community who devote their time and energy to these efforts,” said Lauren Thompson, DMR Public Relations Director. “Together, we removed 50,000 pounds of marine debris and thousands of derelict crab traps from our beaches and waterways. Together, we’re improving the environment and, as a result, the quality of life on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Together, we are making a difference.”

To be eligible for a Keep Mississippi Beautiful/People Against Litter statewide award, a program must show successful results in one of the following environmental leadership areas: litter prevention, beautification and community improvement, minimizing the impact of solid waste on communities and recycling.

The Mississippi Coastal Cleanup is held each year in September in conjunction with the International Coastal Cleanup. The DMR and Mississippi Marine Debris Task Force coordinate the event to raise public awareness about the issues of marine debris. In 2002, 3,474 volunteers picked up 25 tons of marine debris along 107 miles of Coastal waterways in Hancock, Harrison and Jackson counties. Data identifying debris found is collected and submitted for analysis. During the last three cleanups, 9,272 volunteers removed 188,072 pounds—94 tons—of marine debris from Mississippi’s beaches and waterways.

More than 4,000 derelict crab traps have been retrieved and recycled through the

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Keep Mississippi Beautiful Chairperson Nevie McArthur (center), presents DMR Public Relations Director Lauren Thompson (left) with a Second Place Award for the 2002 Mississippi Coastal Cleanup and DMR Marine Fisheries Biologist Traci Floyd (right) with a Third Place Award for the Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program.

Marine Patrol Citation Totals

(April-June 2003)

Shrimp	39
Crab	7
Oyster	42
Commercial Net Fishing	0
Live Bait	0
Miscellaneous Seafood	2
Recreational Fishing	36
Boat and Water Safety	85
Marine Litter	3
Miscellaneous	14

Boat and Water Safety Statistics

(April-June 2003)

Classes held	20
Students certified	329
Outreach events	8
Presentations	3
Boating accidents	13
Fatalities	1

Sound Advice

Lt. Frank Wescovich



I usually try to tailor this column to general boating issues that apply to everyone on all waterways. However, this time I will address some concerns for the offshore boater.

When boating offshore, we sometimes forget the difficulties that may be encountered when returning to port. We are most fortunate in this part of the country that we don’t have breaking bar conditions to contend with on our rivers where they empty into the Sound. We do, however, have some areas such as Camille Cut at Ship Island and Dog Keys Pass just East of Ship Island that can become just as treacherous as a breaking bar to transit in certain weather conditions. These areas are quite shallow and tend to have sandy shoal areas that cause large swells and occasional breakers in bad weather.

Running these passages can be quite deceiving, especially when approaching from offshore. You may be running along just fine at cruising speed in a rolling swell offshore, and before you realize it, you are in a very large following sea and even in occasional breakers as you enter the cut or passage. You find yourself immediately in an extreme situation where you have to make a quick decision to avert disaster.

There are several choices to make at this point. You can either try to run on in and hopefully be able to stay on the back of a swell or you can try to come about and go back out to sea. Neither of these choices is 100 percent fool-proof nor guaranteed to get you out of this tight spot. Most operators will attempt to come about and head back out to sea. The prevailing train of thought here is that it is certainly better to have the bow pointing into the sea than to have the transom exposed to the following seas with swells and breakers. This is good theory, but hard to put into practice.

Coming about in big swells and
See SOUND ADVICE, page 7

DMR promotes recreational saltwater fishing

DMR exhibited at this year's Great Outdoors Festival held May 30-June 1 in Memphis, Tenn., to promote Mississippi Recreational Saltwater Fishing.

The Great Outdoors attracts over 35,000 sportsmen each year and is the largest of its kind in the country. It consists of 15 acres of hunting and fishing exhibits, including water activities and a firing range. This year, the Mississippi Saltwater Fishing Marketing Program reached about 1,200 prospective saltwater fishermen who received our new Mississippi Saltwater Fishing Map

and Guide. This brochure has become very popular and contains information about charter boats, inshore and offshore fishing reefs, as well as locations for fishing piers, boat launches and marinas. Boat and water



DMR Mississippi Recreational Saltwater Fishing Program director Irvin Jackson talks to attendees of the Great Outdoors Festival, held May 30-June 1 in Memphis. The DMR distributed fishing guides and other fishery-related publications.

safety, dive shops and bait and tackle shops are also listed. It was a very successful show and the Mississippi Saltwater Recreational Fishing Marketing Program is planning to exhibit at next year's event in 2004.

SOUND ADVICE, continued from page 6

breakers is a difficult maneuver at best. The slightest hesitation will cause the boat to be overtaken from astern and possibly swamped. Making the turn at the wrong time causes broadside exposure to the swells or breakers that usually ends in disaster. Running in with the following seas might be a better choice considering the circumstances, but has it's own inherent difficulties. It is very easy to misjudge the speed and overrun the swell ahead of you. This will most certainly cause the bow to dig in, causing the boat to pitchpole or cause the boat to broach broadside and capsize.

With all of this considered, the best answer is not get caught in this situation to begin with. Know your boat and its limitations. Watch the weather and be prepared for sudden un-forecast changes. In inclement weather conditions, it is better to stop outside the passage and try to see what the seas are doing ahead of you.

Remember, you will be looking at the back of the swells from a low vantage point and will not be seeing the actual conditions that lie ahead. Err on the side of caution and assume it will be a lot worse in the passage than you are seeing from the outside. It is ultimately better to wait outside for improving conditions or consider an alternate route. Although it makes for a longer voyage, coming in through the main ship channels is probably a wiser choice.

Remember:
WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET.
SAFE BOATING IS NO ACCIDENT!

Lt. Frank Wescovich oversees the DMR's Boat and Water Safety Program. He can be reached at (228) 432-2820 or (228) 435-1332.

Record Breakers!



Angler: Stephen E. Wilson
Hometown: D'Iberville
Species: Reticulate Moray
Weight: 3 lbs., 2.88 oz.
Date: May 2, 2003
Tackle: Conventional



Angler: Marty Wilson
Hometown: Gulfport
Species: Spinycheek Scorpionfish
Weight: 2 lbs., 15.84 oz.
(potential all-tackle world record)
Date: May 2, 2003
Tackle: Conventional



Angler: Stephen E. Wilson
Hometown: D'Iberville
Species: Red Porgy
Weight: 2 lbs., 1.28 oz.
Date: May 2, 2003
Tackle: Conventional



Angler: Michael Suarez
Hometown: Biloxi
Species: Bigeye
Weight: 1 lb., 13.92 oz.
Date: May 2, 2003
Tackle: Conventional



Angler: Ivan Strayham
Hometown: Biloxi
Species: Greater Amberjack
Weight: 15 lbs., 8.48 oz.
Date: May 3, 2003
Tackle: Fly fishing



Angler: Christal Williams
Hometown: Moss Point
Species: Hardhead Catfish
Weight: 2 lbs., 10 oz.
Date: May 18, 2003
Tackle: Conventional



Angler: Destin P. O'Brien
Hometown: Pascagoula
Species: Atlantic Spadefish
Weight: 8 lbs., 1 oz.
Date: May 15, 2003
Tackle: Conventional

Mississippi Recreational Saltwater Fishing Licenses expired June 30.

Purchase yours today!

A Mississippi saltwater fishing license is required for all recreational methods of finfish harvest.

Grand Bay Reserve habitat managed through fire

Prescribed burning benefits native plant species, fire-dependent pine savannas



Photo courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Fire crews stand by to manage the smoke during a prescribed burn at the Grand Bay Reserve.



New growth occurred within one week after a prescribed burn at the Grand Bay Reserve.

Fire crews from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Mississippi Sandhill Crane Fire Management Office, other refuges and interagency Hot Shot crews intentionally burned over 1,140 acres of overgrown pine savanna habitat within the DMR's Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve and the Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge for habitat management and fuel reduction purposes during the month of May.

Benefits

The burned lands benefited greatly from the fires. Many of the preferred plants within the burned areas began regrowing just a few short days after the fire.

Pine savannas are fire-dependent habitats that require regularly prescribed burning about every three to five years to keep the shrubby mid-story growth from shading out the unique low-growing herbaceous (non-woody) layer and decreasing the habitat's high biodiversity (the number of different species found within an area). Prescribed burns are fires that are pre-planned to target areas in need of burns—either for habitat management or to reduce the amount of fuel that could ultimately contribute to uncontrolled wildfires in the future.

History

Historically, these lands used to burn regularly due to naturally occurring lightning strikes, wildfires caused by careless humans, wildfires ignited from sparks emitted from

steam locomotives and other human-related reasons. Because fires occurred regularly, fuels on the forest floor were not allowed to build up, so the impacts of each fire were not as drastic as they could have been. Also, regular fires opened up the savannas allowing the necessary sunlight to reach the ground cover plants.

Human Impact

As more humans moved into the area, fires began to be suppressed in order to protect homesteads and crops. As more and more fires were suppressed, the fuel components of the forests that were no longer getting burned up began to build up over time. Not only did the forest floor fuels such as leaf litter and dead trees accumulate, but also the amount of growing fuels began to multiply. Many of the plant species that grow up in a pine savanna when fire is suppressed such as bayberry, gallberry and the exotic cogon grass, tend to have high volatile components that cause a fire to ignite faster and burn hotter. These conditions not only lead to an increase in the intensity of the wildfires that occurred, but also lead to a significant decrease in the savanna's biodiversity.

Conservation Efforts

To restore the biodiversity within the reserve and to reduce the threat of wildfire to the lands of the reserve and its neighbors, a new fire management plan was developed recently by the reserve in coordination with

the Nature Conservancy, the USFWS and the staff of DMR's Coastal Preserves Program. The plan outlines a regular burning schedule for the lands of the reserve. This schedule is ultimately dependent on the existing climatological conditions, however. Before the lands are burned, a detailed assessment of the weather conditions must be made to ensure that the resulting smoke will not cause a problem and that the lands will not burn so fast or so furiously that the burn gets out of control. If the lands are too dry or too wet or if the wind is blowing from the wrong direction, burns have to be postponed until favorable conditions return.

Partnerships

The reserve's neighbors are also invited to partner in the prescribed burn at no cost to themselves so that they can reduce the threat of wildfire on their lands. This partnership benefits the reserve by decreasing the threat of wildfire spreading to the reserve from non-managed adjacent private lands.

Free video available!

If you live in the vicinity of the reserve and would like more information on prescribed burning, please contact the Grand Bay Reserve at (228) 475-7047. A free short, informational video on the benefits of prescribed burning is available for educational purposes.

Jubilee: Disaster or Bonanza?



Just like you and me, fish need oxygen to breathe. Since they breathe using gills though, that oxygen must be dissolved in the water that surrounds them. Take away the

dissolved oxygen in a body of water, and fish cannot survive. The so-called “dead zone” in the Gulf of Mexico is just such an area of low dissolved oxygen; and, as one might expect, it is largely devoid of fish and most other species of marine life.

The exact amount of dissolved oxygen needed by fish

varies greatly from species to species. Gars, catfish, carp and other warm-water species that commonly inhabit muddy waters can get by with low levels of dissolved oxygen. Others, like rainbow and brook trout that occur in cold, heavily oxygenated, whitewater streams, have relatively high dissolved oxygen requirements. Luckily, all the rapids and riffles that characterize their environment usually keep the level of dissolved oxygen quite high.

Low dissolved oxygen can be caused by a number of different things. Most commonly though it is brought about by high water temperatures that result in water with a decreased oxygen-carrying capacity. At 5 degrees Centigrade, for example, water is saturated with dissolved oxygen at 12.8 milligrams per liter. Raise the temperature to 30 degrees, and the water becomes saturated at only 7.5 milligrams per liter. Both levels are sufficient to sustain most species of fish. Couple the high temperature situation with a low aeration rate, such as might occur when there is little or no wind and resulting surf to oxygenate the water though; and you almost have the formula for oxygen depletion.

The only thing missing is some rainfall and accompanying high-nutrient runoff. This event would trigger a growth spurt, a rapid increase in the number of microscopic algae in the water. One might think that since algae are plants, and plants produce oxygen

through photosynthesis, an algal “bloom” of this nature would help cure the low dissolved oxygen problem.

What actually takes place in this situation is, however, quite different. The algae grow so fast and become so dense that only the surface layer or two of cells enjoy the sunlight. The rest of the algal population lies underneath, shaded from the light and eventually dies as a result. Then, the dead algae begin to decay. The process of bacterial decomposition uses up what little remaining dissolved oxygen there may be in the water, and the fish have no recourse but to try to leave the area.

Some are lucky and manage to find their way into cooler, deeper waters with an abundance of dissolved oxygen. Others head into shallower waters, some even beaching themselves in a vain attempt to escape the suffocating environment.

The result is a “Jubilee.” The disaster for the fish becomes a bonanza for lucky folks who happen to be in the area when this sort of thing occurs. Fish of all species can be scooped up with a dip net or even by hand.

Several years ago, I witnessed a Jubilee in the shallow flats just east of Moses Pier in Gulfport. Folks were scrambling around all over the beach, looking for something to contain the fish that were running up onto the sand. A couple of enterprising fellows had taken a large plastic trash can and filled it to the top with fish, mostly flounders, mullet and white trout. I’m sure they enjoyed a big fish fry that evening.

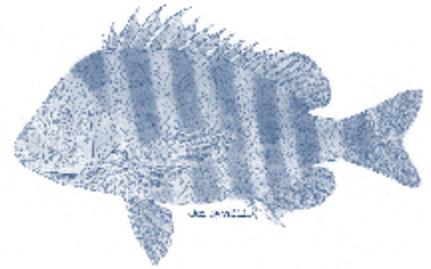
Under similar circumstances, you too might be able to take advantage of a Jubilee. Keep a lookout for the signs—hot air temperatures, dead calm seas, and an unexpected thundershower. You won’t likely have to wait long. After all, this *is* South Mississippi. Head to the nearest shallow mud flats the next day to try your luck.

Dr. Fred Deegen is Deputy Director of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources.

Remember:

A saltwater fishing license is required even for persons catching fish by hand, and applicable minimum size and creel limits must also be observed.

Species profile: Sheepshead



The Sheepshead (*Archosargus probatocephalus*) is a common and well-known fish species along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. They are a member of the Porgy family along with another well-known species, the pinfish (*Lagodon rhomboides*). Sheepshead are distinguished by the six to seven gray black bars on the side of their bodies and for their distinctive flat “sheep-like” teeth.

Sheepshead are found along continental coastal brackish waters from Nova Scotia through the Gulf of Mexico, frequenting areas around pilings and other hard structures like rocks and jetties. Sheepshead are omnivorous, often eating plant material, invertebrates (small oysters, mussels, crabs, barnacles) and small fish.

Sheepshead are challenging fish to catch because they are hard to hook and are tough fighters, but they offer excellent meat that is often compared with red snapper.

Little is known about its spawning habits, other than the adults migrate offshore in the fall so that they may spawn during the spring. Adults have been observed spawning on the offshore Liberty Ship reef sites. The eggs and larvae follow currents to near shore and then work their way to their favored grass flats, where they stay for several months. Upon reaching about six inches, the juveniles move to the areas favored by adults and grow to sexual maturity there.

Sheepshead can be caught using any typical inshore bait such as shrimp, but the best baits to use are crushed blue crab, coquina, mole crabs, fiddler or hermit crabs. Bottom fishing or bouncing your bait around structures is most effective. The current conventional state record is 19 pounds 10 ounces, held by Roy Groue Jr. The world record is 21 pounds 4 ounces.



Seafood Safety Corner

The DMR Seafood Technology Bureau is working hard to serve the industry. The Bureau staff is starting the first quarter routine and follow-up inspections together with the semi-annual water quality sampling collections. Those with repeated violations will be given special attention for technical assistance.

Seafood Technology Bureau staff members attended a conference on the "Integrated Oyster Market Research, Product Development and Evaluation, Promotion and Consumer Education for the Gulf of Mexico's Oyster Industry" June 5-6, 2003, in New Orleans. Our staff presented a board display of the documented post-harvest processing technologies with a poster, brochure and video about available post-harvest processing techniques for oysters.

Although the oyster season closed May 24, there are still many processors operating. These processors get their oysters from neighboring states. A few of the dealers close during the close of the Mississippi oyster season.

However, in the shrimp business, many dealers and harvesters are preparing for the opening of the season, just as the dealers

make use of this time to do repairs in their oyster processing and storage facilities. They also take time to train their people on sanitation and proper handling of product.

Just as a reminder to many, if they need assistance in this area, feel free to contact the Seafood Technology Bureau. We have video equipment and video training materials, and our staff is trained to do this extension work.

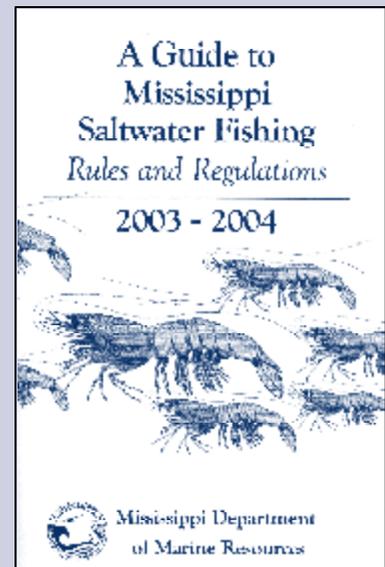
Just this month, the Bureau received several requests of information on Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) and Sanitation training schedules. HACCP and Sanitation training is required to receive a DMR Seafood Processing Permit. The Bureau held an emergency HACCP and Sanitation Training Course May 12 and 13 in the Bolton Building in Biloxi to accommodate these requests. Three new local seafood dealers participated in the training course. Mr. John Veazey, the FDA Regional Specialist helped with the training.

To be on the safe side of the law, several individuals had requested information from the Seafood Technology Bureau to verify whether their businesses needed to be permitted or licensed. Many were not familiar with what licenses and permits were required for the different types of seafood businesses. If you have license or permit questions, please contact the Seafood Technology Bureau at (228) 374-5000.



Ruth Posadas

New saltwater fishing rules and regulations guides are here!



The 2003-2004 "A Guide to Mississippi Saltwater Fishing Rules and Regulations" is now available at the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, 1141 Bayview Avenue, Suite 101, Biloxi, Miss. Stop by our office for your free copy. The booklet features the artwork of DMR fisheries staff member Joe Jewell.

AWARDS, continued from page 6

Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program since the program began in 1999. Derelict traps are defined as traps, which are un-buoyed, unmarked and not actively fished. These traps are abandoned or lost due to uncontrollable environmental factors, inadvertent clipping of float lines by propellers and theft. These traps are a navigational hazard and may contribute to crab and finfish mortality. The DMR estimates there are at least another 7,000 derelict crab traps needing retrieval and recycling along the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

The Derelict Crab Trap Removal Program, a joint effort of the DMR and Gulf Coast Research Lab, is funded in part by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality through the Mississippi Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP). CIAP is a federally sponsored program that provides money for the state and counties to address statewide coastal issues.

Celebrate the Gulf to be held Sept. 27

Looking for something educational, fun and free for the entire family to enjoy?

Come help us Celebrate National Estuaries Day at the award-winning Celebrate the Gulf Marine Education Festival to be held Sept. 27, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at Pass Christian Harbor.

Lively, hands-on exhibits addressing marine and estuarine environmental issues and recreational and commercial activities associated with the Gulf will be set up throughout the festival grounds. This year's exhibits will include wildlife and native plants as well as high-tech demonstrations of state-of-the-art oceanographic equipment. Demonstrations on flyfishing and techniques and the safe

operation of canoes, kayaks, personal watercraft and other boats will also be offered periodically throughout the festival.

Additionally, a Marine Cuisine tent will be featured to teach adults how to choose, prepare and cook local seafood species. Local chefs and fishermen will create their specialties using local coastal seafood species such as speckled trout, shrimp and oysters. Ask for a free sample!

For the youngsters, a Junior Catch and Release Fishing Rodeo will begin at 8 a.m. and finish at 11 a.m. Children 12 and under may participate. Registration will take place at the festival site.

For more information about this event, call (228) 374-5000.



Take a Bow

Recognizing employees' commitment to excellence

Lane completes advanced Cardiff training



Melanie Lane

DMR marine fisheries employee Melanie Lane recently completed Cardiff TELEform Automated Forms Design Training on June 2-4, and additionally attended Cardiff TELEform Advanced Automated Forms Design on June 5-6, which was held in San Diego. The training focused on how to design bar coded forms and link those forms to selected databases.

Once the form is created, high definition scanners are used to scan in the completed bar coded forms into a reader program, which further processes the data to an image verifier. After the data has been verified it is then submitted into the appropriate database. The DMR uses Cardiff-TELEform image software to capture images from the trip tickets that are being used for its commercial fisheries landings. In February 2003, the DMR upgraded its existing Cardiff TELEform software to a new Enterprise Edition, which allows for a multi-user environment. We are looking at making certain forms available for download via the Internet in the future.

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DMR wins national communicator awards

The DMR received three national awards at the annual National Association of Government Communicators (NAGC) Communications School held April 9-11 at the Hotel Monteleone in New Orleans.



(From left: NAGC president Gaye Farris, Public Relations Director Lauren Thompson, Public Relations Representative Susan Perkins and Public Relations Representative Marti Schuman.)

The DMR is one of just 60 government agencies in the United States earning the prestigious Blue Pencil Awards at this year's annual NAGC Blue Pencil/Gold Screen Awards banquet, which recognizes excellence in written, filmed, audio/videotaped, published and photographed government information products.

The following awards were presented to the DMR: Second Place was presented to the DMR Public Affairs Bureau in the category Visual Communications/Calendar for the "2002 Preserving and Enjoying Mississippi's Coastal Resources Calendar," Second Place was presented to the DMR Public Affairs Bureau in the category Special Communications/Shoestring Budget for its "Comprehensive Resource Management Plan Data Release Press Kit," and an Honorable Mention was presented to the DMR Public Affairs Bureau and Coastal Preserves Bureau in the category Publications, Brochures/Booklets for the "Exploring Mississippi's Coastal Habitats Brochure."

Otolith Processing Workshop



Mark Holden (left) and Debbie Belk (right). NOT PICTURED: Wesley Devers.

DMR marine fisheries staff members Mark Holden, Debbie Belk and Wesley Devers attended an otolith processing workshop in St. Petersburg, Fla. on May 21. Biologists study the otoliths, or inner ear bones of fish, to determine the ages of Gulf fish species and to learn more about population and lifespan.

The purpose of the workshop was to coordinate our efforts with other Gulf states' otolith labs to ensure that targeted species—red snapper and greater amberjack—are aged using the same methods.

Happy Anniversary!

These anniversaries mark employees' years of service with the Department of Marine Resources and the state of Mississippi.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (7/1/80) George Wright | (8/13/01) Joan Murphy |
| (7/1/85) Scott Gordon | (8/15/01) Richard Cooley |
| (7/1/87) Joey Moran | (8/20/01) Christine Popwell |
| (7/1/91) David Rose | (8/21/02) Jill Bockenstette |
| (7/1/91) Frank Wescovich | (8/25/86) Judy Bosarge |
| (7/1/93) Linda McCarthy | (8/25/97) Marty Jones |
| (7/1/97) John Grimsley | (9/1/98) Kenny Melvin |
| (7/7/92) Charlie Vyles | (9/1/99) Robert Hilbun |
| (7/8/02) William W. Walker | (9/1/00) Don Baxter |
| (7/15/99) Michaela Hill | (9/1/00) Alan McArthur |
| (7/15/02) Kevin Schultz | (9/1/00) Tina Shumate |
| (7/21/97) Joe Ziegler | (9/1/01) Linda Bullard |
| (7/25/96) Corky Perret | (9/9/00) Matt Hill |
| (7/31/90) Dorothy Daniel | (9/10/01) Gwynn Taylor |
| (8/1/86) Mike Buchanan | (9/15/99) Erick Porche |
| (8/1/99) Susan Perkins | (9/15/99) Joe Roach |
| (8/1/01) J.R. Herrington | (9/15/99) Al Warburton |
| (8/1/02) Bryan Wallace | (9/18/00) Jerry Brashier |
| (8/7/02) Ben Bloodworth | (9/18/00) Stan Weidman |
| (8/7/02) Justin Godfrey | (9/20/01) Marti Schuman |

We thank them for their dedicated service to the management of our marine resources.



**Mississippi Department
of Marine Resources**
1141 Bayview Avenue, Suite 101
Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

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DMR Calendar

July 15

Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources meeting, Bolton Building, 1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, 9 a.m.

August 19

Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources meeting, Bolton Building, 1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, 9 a.m.

August 21

Comprehensive Resource Management Plan meeting, Bolton Building, 1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, 10 a.m.

September 16

Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources meeting, Bolton Building, 1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, 9 a.m.

September 20

Mississippi Coastal Cleanup, 8-11 a.m. Call (228) 374-5000 for details.

September 27

Celebrate the Gulf Marine Education Festival, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Pass Christian Harbor. Call (228) 374-5000 for details.

October 16

Comprehensive Resource Management Plan meeting, Bolton Building, 1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, 10 a.m.

October 21

Mississippi Commission on Marine Resources meeting, Bolton Building, 1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, 9 a.m.

Doc's Fishing Tips

Fred Deegen, Ph.D., Deputy Director

This time of year, the best topwater action with speckled trout along the front beaches often occurs near daybreak, before the sun has had a chance to really heat things up and drive the fish into deeper water. Fishing a Zara Spook, Mirrolure, Norm Bait or other floater at such times can be quite spectacular.

If you did not receive this issue of Coastal Markers in the mail and would like to be placed on the mailing list, please fill out below and mail to: Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Office of Public Affairs, 1141 Bayview Ave., Biloxi, MS 39530; call (228) 374-5022, ext. 5062; or e-mail susan.perkins@dmr.state.ms.us.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____