President’s Corner

Howdy

After a long cool spring, I realized yesterday looking at my soaked shirt, it is absolutely summer. For us lake managers that means an increase in aquatic herbicide applications and the end of fish transport for a few months. This is always welcome, as it signals a return to normalcy in schedule. But I am already looking towards fall when new ponds will be stocked with forage. Hopefully, this drought will break as parts of Texas have been without fishing for a couple years now.

Speaking of looking towards something, I am really excited about the 2014 TAA Conference & Trade Show in Fredericksburg. The town is going to be a great change of pace for vendors, speakers and attendees alike. There are many places to visit and wines to taste in this fine example of historical Texas.

There are some rumblings about subtle changes with the way tilapia regulations are being interpreted and enforced at TPWD. We are on the front lines and working to ensure that any changes are a positive for consumers and aquaculturists in Texas.

Finally, Granvil Treece is retiring after many year of service to the aquaculture industry. I have known him for a long time and I am positive he will be missed. Granvil, remember to schedule more hunts before you bogged down with “Honey Dos”.

See you next issue

Tight lines and full stringers.

John Jones
President
Happenings at Texas Parks and Wildlife: Inland Fisheries
By: Rob Schmid

A high priority for the TPWD Inland Fisheries hatcheries this spring was Striped Bass and Hybrid Striped Bass. We pulled out all the stops, making multiple broodfish collection trips and creating multiple spawning sessions to ensure we made enough fish. Now, after 24 hour plus spawning sessions, 24 hours/day egg jar duty, late night pond stockings (conventional wisdom is that STB and HSB are sensitive to sunlight) and early morning fingerling harvests (to beat the heat), the fruits of our labors are starting to show. Between the John D Parker East Texas Fish Hatchery (JDPETFH) (we’ll figure out how to shorten the name eventually), Possum Kingdom and AE Wood, a total of more than 8.8 million fry and fingerlings have been stocked to public waters. And, we’re not quite finished as of this writing. JDP and PK still have STB to stock over the next full week and AEW has 3 additional HSB ponds to harvest and stock in the next few days. The season total could reach 10 million STB and HSB stocked for 2013! Those stocking efforts should provide plenty of exciting fishing opportunities for years to come.

Guadalupe Bass (the Texas state fish) was a top priority this spring as well. AEW completed stockings of over 360,000 fingerlings into the South Llano River and the Blanco River.

Northern Largemouth Bass and Florida Largemouth Bass took a back seat to the Stripers and Hybrids and Guads. To date, a little over 2.5 million fingerlings have been stocked into public waters. JDP and AEW are about to start restocking ponds with LMB fry, as they harvest out their Striper ponds. It’s anticipated that another 2.5-3 million LMB fingerlings will get stocked out before the season is over.

Another species not often talked about in Texas is Walleye. Most folks think of Walleye as a cold water species, but, in the Panhandle region, there’s a small but dedicated group of anglers that dearly love, the Walleye stockings TPWD does. The Dundee hatchery has been bone dry for the past 2 years, now, has enough well water to run its hatching jar rack for a couple weeks this spring, producing and stocking about 1.8 million Walleye fry.

I’ve thrown out a bunch of numbers thus far in this article. I might as well wind things up with a grand total. Between all 5 hatcheries, a total of 12 species have been worked with, including Koi (which is used as an internal forage species). Total numbers of fry and fingerling stock to public water (not including Koi fry) equals a little over 13.6 million fish.

It’s been a busy spring, and there’s still plenty of time left for making more fish. We only hope and pray our water supplies hold out and we’ll be blessed with late spring rains.

Granvil Treece Announces Retirement from Texas Sea Grant

As many will recall, Granvil Treece, long time TX Sea Grant "shrimp aquaculture specialist" retired a couple years ago. Granvil had a number of responsibilities, but many will recall that he lead the Shrimp Culture workshops for many years. After his retirement, he came back to TX Sea Grant on a part time basis. Now, at the end of June, he’s retiring “all the way”, and heading north to the good life at his beautiful new home in the Lampasas area. Granvil, thank you for a job well done from the many people of Texas you’ve assisted throughout the years and best wishes as you enter your new life. Don’t be a stranger. We’re looking forward to seeing you in Fredericksburg in January.
USDA/FSA Trade Adjustment Assistance Program Update – April, 2013
By: Granvil Treece

The USDA/FSA Trade Adjustment Assistance Program (TAA) was established to assist the shrimp harvest and aquaculture industries, the lobster harvest industry, the wild blueberries industry in Maine and the catfish farmers and asparagus farmers across the USA.

You can find additional information on the individual commodities at www.TAAforFarmers.org.

TAA provides training to help producers increase profitability, improve production efficiency, consider marketing opportunities, and evaluate alternative enterprises. TAA will also help participants develop a business plan, evaluate changes to their business, and provide funding to implement changes.

As of April 9, 2013, here's what the TAA team has completed:

- 9,834 applicants have completed the Initial Orientation
- 8,847 applicants have completed 12 hours of Intensive Training
  -1,798 applicants have taken 13 or more hours of training
  -796 applicants have taken 15 or more hours of training
  -One applicant took 42 hours of training
- 8,755 applicants have submitted an Initial Business Plan
- 7,615 Long Term Business Plans have been completed

Follow up Opinion on USDA Trade Adjustment Assistance
By: Granvil Treece

The USDA Trade Adjustment Assistance Program has helped numerous farmers in their time of need for assistance. But what is really needed is for the US Government and Congress to step up to the plate and assist US farmers by regulating imports. This would do more to assist farmers than trying to provide a Band-Aid fix after the wound is inflicted. Shrimp and catfish imports, for example, could be regulated so that US farmers are on an equal playing field, can finally compete and find a sustainable way to make a living. Seafood produced in most foreign countries that comes to this country as imports does not face the same stringent environmental and social regulations as our farmers face here, and is subsequently not as expensive to produce. This creates an unfair advantage for imports and often lowers the price of the product in the US marketplace. This is causing many of our shrimp and catfish producers to go out of business. The open and unregulated agriculture markets seem to be more important to Congress than the survival of the US agriculture industry.
TAMU Aquaculture Research and Teaching Facility Celebrates 40th Anniversary
By: Granvil Treece

On Friday April 5, 2013 the Texas A&M AgriLife Research and the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences at Texas A&M University celebrated the 40-year anniversary of their aquaculture facility and the recently completed renovation of the facility’s pond complex.

The 40-acre Aquaculture Research and Training Facility (ARTF) is located about nine miles west of the TAMU campus and College Station on State Highway 60 and is operated by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences (WFSC) for AgriLife Research, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and AgriLife Extension.

Invited guests to the celebration on the site enjoyed grilled and fried fish and a whole host of other fine foods, including cake to celebrate the occasion. Dr. Michael Masser, WFSC Department Head and Dr. Delbert Gatlin, Associate Department Head both spoke to welcome the guests and said the facility is dedicated to research and teaching that promotes sound management and practices in warm-water aquaculture and aquatic ecology. They both acknowledged the sponsors. Delicious fish and socializing were enjoyed by all whom attended.

The facility includes laboratories featuring flow-through and recirculating tank systems equipped with modern research equipment for work in nutrition, bioenergetics, environmental physiology and developmental biology of finfish and shellfish.

“The work at the facility is as varied as the world of aquaculture,” Gatlin said.

Goals of the facility are:
- To improve production efficiency of various aquatic species through advances in fish genetics, nutrition and feeding, diet development as well as health management.
- To support the development of wholesome and affordable seafoods through scientific discovery, novel technologies and new processes related to aquaculture.

“We are extremely proud of the many accomplishments stemming from work done at the facility,” Gatlin said. “Globally, aquaculture provides over half the fish and shellfish consumed worldwide and production is growing by about 10 percent per year. In Texas, the industry contributes approximately $360 million annually to the state’s economy.”

To stay abreast of this fast-growing industry, AgriLife Research scientists in the department continually conduct research at the facility to support the economic and environmental sustainability of aquaculture not only in Texas, but also nationally, he said.

“Aquaculture research, teaching and AgriLife Extension activities have all been continuously conducted within the department and at the facility over the past 40 years,” Gatlin said. “During that time, faculty, former students and staff have made numerous contributions in advancing the scientific and technological bases of aquaculture for seafood production and fish stock enhancement. Many have also held leadership roles in various state, national and international aquaculture organizations.”

Gatlin said recent activities include various research projects funded by $2.5 million in grants and contracts for nutrition and feeding research of species including red drum, hybrid striped bass and channel catfish. Research funded by this money has led to refinements in diet formulations and feeding practices that have resulted in considerable economic benefits to producers through reduced production costs, more efficient diet utilization, less negative environmental consequences and improvement of the nutritional value of the resulting fish products, he said.

“The Marine Stock Enhancement Program operated by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department also has directly benefitted from various genetics, nutrition and physiology research projects conducted at the facility,” Gatlin said. “This program introduces hatchery-produced red drum and spotted sea trout into Texas bays to support recreational fisheries having a $1.8-billion impact annually on the Texas economy.”

The
Aquaculture Research and Teaching Facility also has ongoing collaborations with the Inland Fisheries Division of Texas Parks and Wildlife in support of the Neighborhood Fishing Program. That program involves the cultivation and stocking of urban ponds with channel catfish to provide angling opportunities for the public in major urban areas. TPWD assisted with the ARTF pond lining and the ARTF provided a location for the new TPWD inland hatchery, which needed a new building to replace the old one in Bryan, Texas. That facility is complete on the ARTF site. So it is good to see such a cooperative effort by both TAMU and TPWD on state-owned property.

New TPWD Inland Fisheries Hatchery at the ARTF site.

When the Inland Fisheries Management Offices were first established in 1973, it consisted of an office/laboratory and 24 earthen ponds less than a quarter-acre each in size. Another building was added in 1980 to accommodate fish culture systems for research purposes. The facility today has two enclosed buildings with more than 200 culture systems consisting of glass aquaria and fiberglass tanks.

The facility's name was changed in the late 1980s to better reflect not only its research but also its teaching function, Gatlin said. The facility today supports the teaching of laboratory portions of several aquatic courses within the department as well as AgriLife Extension educational programs.

The pond facility was again renovated in 1993 and expanded to 36 one-tenth-acre ponds, each with a concrete harvest basin. The most recent renovation, completed in 2012, saw the ponds re-shaped and re-sloped with the installment of rubber liners to minimize soil erosion and maximize water retention. The renovation was made possible by contributions from AgriLife Research and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Dr. Robert R. Stickney was present at the celebration and was asked to say a few words about the facility since he headed up the facility in its early days. Dr. Stickney said, "I began my first stint at Texas A&M University in April, 1975 as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Science. In addition to teaching assignments, I was to oversee the Aquaculture Research Center (now Aquaculture Research and Teaching Facility). I had, of course, seen the facility during my interview for the position, but hadn't realized that the ponds leaked so badly. It seems that a few core samples were taken in the only place on the site that actually had some clay in the soil. That was not where the ponds were constructed. My facilities caretaker, W.A. Isbell, and I spent part of our time each day moving irrigation pipes around in our mostly uphill battle to keep fish in the ponds.

When we finally completed the plumbing and kettle at the outlet of the 8-acre reservoir, we had plenty of water, but then had invasive plants, unwanted wild fish, and the development of freshwater sponges in our pipes. Ultimately, we were able to drill a fairly shallow well and then had about 150 gpm of water that was high in iron.

Over the nine years that I was in the Department, a highly productive wet laboratory was constructed. We got access to a warm-water well that allowed us to maintain good growth in our indoor aquaria and tanks year-round. A significant number of graduate students obtained their advanced degrees during that period. Many of them went on to very productive professional jobs in industry, government, and education.

I'm proud to have had Delbert Gatlin as an undergraduate honors student. He conducted research at the facility on catfish nutrition that got him two offers to go directly from his B.S. into Ph.D. programs by arguably the best catfish nutritionists in the world at that time. He came back to Texas A&M to oversee the Aquaculture Center and has done an outstanding job, with the generous support of the University and, of course the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences. I never dreamed that the facility would reach its current stage of development. It is certainly equivalent to the best that exist at other universities and will not only provide improved opportunities for controlled research, but also serve as a magnet to attract the students who will lead warmwater aquaculture production and research in the future.

Working the leaky ponds, moving irrigation pipe, mucking around in the mud trying to catch the wily tilapia that were the subject of some of our research, learning to drive a tractor (and getting it stuck in a pond or two), and working with a cadre of outstanding students represent some of my best memories. Coming back to Texas A&M as Sea Grant Director and Professor of
Oceanography after over 20 years at other institutions provided me the opportunity to witness the development of the Aquaculture Center under Delbert’s leadership. It was an honor to be asked by him to provide a few remarks at the 40th anniversary celebration.

Acknowledgments: Thanks to Linda Causey, Website Designer WFSC for providing AquaNotes the written text from Del Gatlin and photos. Thank you to Brian Ray and other ARTF members for cooking the very tasty fish, and thanks to Bob Stickney for providing a few written words for this article which summarized the talk that he gave on the site at the celebration.

2013-14 Calendar

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<th>Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>July 14-17, 2013</td>
<td>TAPMS Annual Conference in combination with APMS</td>
<td>San Antonio, TX. Updates can be found on their website: <a href="http://www.tapms.org">www.tapms.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>January 29-31, 2014</td>
<td>TAA Annual Conference &amp; Trade Show</td>
<td>Fredericksburg, TX. Updates can be found on our website: <a href="http://www.texasaquaculture.org">www.texasaquaculture.org</a></td>
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<td>February 9-12, 2014</td>
<td>WAS-Aquaculture America</td>
<td>Seattle, WA. Updates can be found on their website: <a href="http://www.was.org">www.was.org</a></td>
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Gulf fisheries council votes to implement marine aquaculture plan

By Erich Luening

The Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council recently voted to implement their marine aquaculture Fisheries Management Plan (FMP), giving potential offshore aquaculture businesses in the southern United States a stronger toe-hold in home waters.

Currently US offshore aquaculture is in the pilot stages and this will be the first regional offshore aquaculture plan to be implemented in the country.

“The FMP was approved in 2009, but was never implemented. This action will allow implementation”, according to Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council’s (GMFMC) Public Information Officer, Charlene Ponce.

As part of the implementation, the fishery being managed is “Offshore Aquaculture” with authorized gear being “cages, net pens,” according to a ruling passed the first week of February.

Following a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) submittal of its final response package to the last draft of the plan, the Council added a few more changes to the plan, based on recommendations made by NOAA in their response plan. A follow-up vote on the aquaculture FMP with NOAA additions passed for the final plan to be put into effect.

In fact, NOAA stalled the process early on when the agency argued that the aquaculture Fisheries Management Plan falls under the Magnuson-Stevens Act which gives regulatory authority to
NOAA to enforce laws regarding marine fisheries, and asked the council for more time to review the plan under Magnuson-Stevens. NOAA then asked the Gulf Council to hold any vote on the FMP until NOAA could develop its own National Aquaculture Policy, which the agency did in 2012. After they developed their policy they then worked with the Gulf Council to make sure their plan meshed with the new National Aquaculture Policy.

At the same meeting in February when the Council was going to take their final vote, NOAA officials submitted their final response package and the measure passed.

In the last issue of ANA (January/February 2013), the Director of Aquaculture at NOAA, Michael Rubino said “The Council’s Fishery Management Plan (FMP) can be a model for other regional council’s FMP’s on offshore aquaculture.” There are seven other regional councils managing offshore fisheries around the United States.

The final implementation of the FMP establishes a regional permitting process to manage the development of sustainable mariculture in the Gulf Exclusive Economic Zone. Approximately 5 to 20 offshore aquaculture operations will be permitted in Gulf Waters over the next decade or so with an estimated annual production of up to 64 million pounds. Sources close to the plan say there are already permit applications submitted to the council.

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Fish on (Prescription) Drugs
By Drake Bennett

BloombergBusinessweek, Tecnology
February 14, 2013

Imagine you are a perch. One day you notice that all the other perch around you are acting different. Previously timid and communal—as the species has been for millennia—they’ve become foolhardy, leaving the safety of the school to search alone for bits of zooplankton to eat, practically daring the birds and bass that prey on them to attack. In short, they’ve gone nuts.

Being a fish, you would not be terribly introspective, and in any event, it would be beyond your abilities to imagine the cause: that another species, one that lives, improbably, on land, suffers from problems called “anxiety” and “depression” because of its enormous brain (among other things). That animal has taken to eating exotic chemicals to change its behavior. It then excretes those chemicals into the water that you breathe so that you, too, are ingesting those chemicals. And they’re changing your behavior.

It’s not news that human beings dump a lot of stuff into lakes and rivers. The evidence is all around us—massive blooms of algae from fertilizer runoff, stunted fish and dead waterfowl from mine tailings, and oil spills. But that is stuff we’re used to thinking about as pollution, and they’re the sort of effects—die-offs and deformity—that we’re used to worrying about. What about the stuff we actually put into our own bodies? What effect does that have when it gets out into the world? And what happens to a species—or, for that matter, an entire ecosystem—when we put it on drugs?

In a paper published Thursday in Science, a team of Swedish researchers tried to provide at least part of an answer. They first tested various Swedish bodies of water for the levels of an anti-anxiety drug called oxazepam—like many drugs, oxazepam doesn’t get filtered out by sewage treatment plants. In a lab, the researchers then placed wild European perch in tanks with comparable drug levels. The researchers found that the drugs were, indeed,
having an effect: Even at dosages at the lower end of what they found in the wild, the fish in the oxazepam tanks were less social than those in the control tanks. The drugged fish put more distance between themselves and other fish, and they ate faster than normal. At higher dosages, the researchers also found an increase in what they termed “boldness,” the lack of hesitation with which the fish entered an unfamiliar area.

“We were very surprised,” says Jonatan Klaminder, an environmental scientist at Umea University and one of the co-authors of the paper. “The concentrations out in the environment are very low, but it’s still enough to generate effects that we know are relevant for ecological processes.” He adds that most of the behavioral changes they found were, from the point of view of each fish, actually productive: The fish feed at a faster rate, they become more active. “They actually perform better,” he said. For perch, at least, putting oxazepam in a river is a bit like putting Adderall in the water supply of a college dorm (or cocaine in Charlie Chaplin’s salt).

However, in the lab there weren’t any predators. And as Klaminder and his co-authors point out, oxazepam-dosed perch, swimming around blithely in the wild by themselves, are probably at higher predation risk. Also, the fact that the drug makes them eat so ravenously could throw their environments out of whack. The plankton that perch eat in turn eat algae, and if the perch ate up all the plankton the algae would run rampant, choking off the rest of the life in the area. As Klaminder underlines, he and his fellow researchers only looked at one fish and one drug. But ecosystems are full of plants and animals that react to chemicals in different ways, and our rivers and lakes are increasingly full of a crazy cocktail of pharmaceuticals—from Prozac to the estrogen from birth control pills—many of which doctors would probably hesitate to prescribe together. Rebecca Klaper, an ecologist at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, is one of the few other researchers to have done work on fish and psychopharmaceuticals—her research is on fathead minnows and fluoxetine, the active ingredient in Prozac. She found that fluoxetine in the water didn’t affect the females, but made the males essentially obsessive-compulsive (a condition, interestingly enough, that Prozac is prescribed for in humans). The males spend an unusual amount of time building their underwater nests. When the amount of fluoxetine was increased, the males started ignoring the females. When the dosage was increased still further, the males killed the females.

According to Klaper, the problem of drugs in our waterways doesn’t have an easy solution—upgrading all of the water treatment plants in the world would be an enormous expense, and we still don’t have the technology to filter many pharmaceutical compounds out of the water. Still, she points out, we can take some encouragement from the fact that many compounds don’t actually have an effect at the sort of concentrations they’re found today in lakes and rivers. “There are medications that probably we don’t need to be as worried about,” she says. “We should focus on finding out which ones are of most concern.” In the meanwhile, as a species we might think about getting our own prescription drug issues under control. The rest of the animal family is getting concerned.

Bennett is a staff writer for Bloomberg Businessweek in New York.
US trade commission takes aim at shrimp imports
Farmers and fishermen seek countervailing duties against seven nations

By Erich Luening

To pressure the U.S. government to curb shrimp imports from seven countries that allegedly subsidize their shrimp producers, Gulf of Mexico shrimp farmers have joined fishermen in petitions asking for countervailing duties against these nations.

In February, the United States International Trade Commission (USITC) announced their decision that there’s a reasonable indication that the U.S. shrimp industry is materially injured by imports of subsidized frozen warm-water shrimp from China, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam.

So far Ecuador, Vietnam, and India deny the accusations and are challenging the investigations.

As a result of the USITC’s affirmative determination, the United States Department of Commerce will continue to conduct investigations on imports of these products, with its preliminary countervailing duty determinations due on or about March 25th, according to the agency.

The USITC’s decision is just the latest in an ongoing effort by the U.S. shrimp industry, including shrimp farmers, to push this petition forward. It started in December 2012 when the Coalition of Gulf Shrimp Industries (COGSI), which represents a group of shrimp processors in the northern Gulf of Mexico sought to define the domestic industry as only including shrimp processors and wholesalers, the Southern Shrimp Alliance (SSA), which includes mainly domestic shrimp producers, had their legal team at Ad Hoc Shrimp Industries Committee (AHSIC) file a legal brief that the domestic industry must include both shrimp fishermen and farmers along with processors and wholesalers as part of the petitions.

Tough times for farmers
The shrimp farming sector in Texas has had a hard time in recent years under the burden of cheaply priced frozen imports that have significantly lowered shrimp prices all around.

“Shrimp prices have really been depressed since 2004 when the European markets rejected shrimp owing to Chloremphenicol and those shrimp flooded into the US market since FDA regulations allowed for a higher level of this chemical than Europe,” explained Granvil Treece, of the Texas Agriculture and Mechanics University’s Sea Grant office. “Shrimp continued to flood our markets and the US Dept. of Commerce made some attempts to help control imports, but none have been effective,” said Treece. “In 2006 the US Dept. of Commerce found six countries guilty of “dumping” shrimp into
the US market and levied taxes on shrimp imports from those countries to try and assist.”

So far efforts by the US government have been largely unsuccessful in helping the domestic harvest industry and shrimp farmers and that is one of the main reasons we have seen such a decline in the number of farms and fewer shrimp boats out there fishing, he explained.

“High feed prices, due to the unintended consequences of the ethanol surge in this country, have resulted because of high corn prices. Aquaculture feeds shot up 25% in the US in 2008 and haven’t really come back down much,” Treece noted. Some shrimp farmers have moved out of the industry outright to farm other species, like catfish, to stay afloat.

Bowers Shrimp Farm is now Bowers Shrimp and Fish, after transferring some shrimp acreage over to catfish because of the squeeze on shrimp prices caused by foreign imports, among other pressures. Reed Bowers, of Bowers Shrimp and Catfish Farms, said in a previous issue of Aquaculture North America that they decided to move from shrimp to catfish in 2004. In July, the Bowers built a catfish processing plant as well.

“We were diversifying, but now catfish are having as bad a time as shrimp,” he said. Plans now are to begin farming striped bass.

Fritz Jaenike at Kava farms in Bayview Texas says that they have a bad time as well, but they’re trying to fight back.

“Kava Farms recently became petitioners on the Ad Hoc Shrimp Committee and we hope that the lawsuit will somehow help to increase the prices of shrimp imported into the U.S. and thereby increase the prices for domestically produced shrimp,” he said.

**Amended Petition**

In January, the Ad Hoc Shrimp Industries Committee, which represents the Southern Shrimp Alliance, filed an amendment to the petition before the USITC to include members of the Alliance, thus members of AHSIC (i.e. Shrimp Farmers and Shrimp Fishermen) could better represent the whole industry allegedly harmed by subsidized frozen shrimp products from the seven nations named in the petition.

These shrimp harvesters comprise 176 of the 238 members of the Ad Hoc Shrimp Industry Committee, according to the amendment.

“If the Commission adopts the processors’ arguments narrowly defining the domestic industry, SSA & AHSIC plan on challenging that preliminary determination in the final stage of the Commission’s investigation,” said John Williams, executive director of the Southern Shrimp Alliance.

If the Commission accepts SSA’s and AHSIC’s broad definition, including shrimp fishermen and farmers, SSA & AHSIC will defend that holding in the final stage of the investigation, he added.

“It is important for shrimp farmers to get involved in the case,” Williams argued. “Shrimp farmers that want to join AHSIC are welcome and will receive information and updates on the case directly from SSA. AHSIC members need not be members of SSA; the goal of AHSIC is to make sure the entire shrimp industry is permitted to participate in the proceedings.”

**Waiting on Commerce**

For now shrimp farmers, like fishermen and processors, have to wait until, on or about March 25th to see what the USITC’s preliminary countervailing duties determinations will be.

During the wait, Williams said the SSA will continue to keep its phone lines and email open to all warm-water shrimp aquaculture businesses which want to join the petition’s drive, or just get some questions answered about the investigation.

“In fact, we got a request from a shrimp farming operation to join AHSIC [in February]. But there are still many other shrimp farming operations that have not been involved and likely have little knowledge of the trade case or that SSA works with shrimp farmers as well as shrimpers,” Williams lamented. “Should your readers be interested, I am happy to pass on any information that would be useful. I would stress that involvement in the trade case does not need to come through SSA. The most important thing is that shrimp farmers be involved.” The Southern Shrimp Alliance website is [www.shrim palliance.com](http://www.shrim palliance.com).
Seafood packers struggle with shrimp shortage
05/18/2013
Associated Press (AP) - Austin Bureau

BEAUMONT, Texas Seafood Lover owner Steve Edwards is determined not to raise his shrimp prices, at least for now, despite a lag in supply this season. Edwards has been primarily buying shrimp from three boats in the area for the past 30 years. He knows the shrimpers’ costs are up and their catches down, he said. Still, Edwards told The Beaumont Enterprise (http://bit.ly/10vPJMS) that he would not change prices on one of his best-selling items for at least the next month or two. "I hope I can weather it," he said of the shrimp shortfall. "They could turn around and have a good season."

The commercial shrimp season will close 30 minutes after sunset May 23, which is about a week later than normal. Both Texas and the National Marine Fisheries Service decided to delay the close to allow shrimp that have reached the Gulf to grow to a larger, more valuable size, according to the Coastal Fisheries Division of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Shrimp growth rates have been slower this spring because of cooler temperatures and higher salt quantities, according to the state agency.

The United States imports about 80 percent of its shrimp, so restaurants that stock imported, farm-raised shrimp will not be impacted by the local shrimp shortage. Local restaurants that use wild caught shrimp won't be so lucky.

The Schooner Restaurant in Nederland gets shrimp from JBS Shrimp Packing Co. in Port Arthur, said Steve Megas, one of the restaurant's owners. The restaurant has dealt with limited shrimp availability in the past after hurricanes and the BP oil spill in 2010, he said "We're going to do our best not to increase any prices," Megas said. "But that's an unknown right now."

Shrimp is one of The Schooner's most popular items and is offered in a variety of dishes, he said. Customers who demand quality and want to eat locally caught seafood would be willing to pay a little more for their favorite shrimp dishes, Megas said. "I don't think limited availability or increased prices will decrease people's appetite for shrimp," he said.

Texans have gotten accustomed to shrimp shortages, said Terrie Looney, a coastal and marine resource agent with Texas Sea Grant College Program at Texas A&M University. Baby shrimp grow up in fresh water bays and marshes, but their habitats have been hammered repeatedly in recent years by hurricanes, droughts, high temperatures and human destruction, she said. "There's no place for the babies to go," Looney said.

If the "babies" cannot mature, then shrimpers cannot reel in catches that cover the costs of going out to drag their nets. And if the shrimpers are not going out, then there is no reason for them to purchase fuel or nets. "It tends to roll through our economy," Looney said of poor shrimping seasons. Every dollar of shrimp is spent about three times through the local economy, she said. "That's $3 that's not going to get spent," she said. Port Arthur is the No. 4 spot in the Gulf for shrimp catches, Looney said. Before Hurricane Rita in 2005, the Port Arthur Area Shrimpers Association had more than 300 members. Now, the group numbers around 95.

Kyle Kimball, president of the association, said there was not enough shrimp in the waters for him to go out this season. He has seen four or five boats come in recently because they have not caught anything.