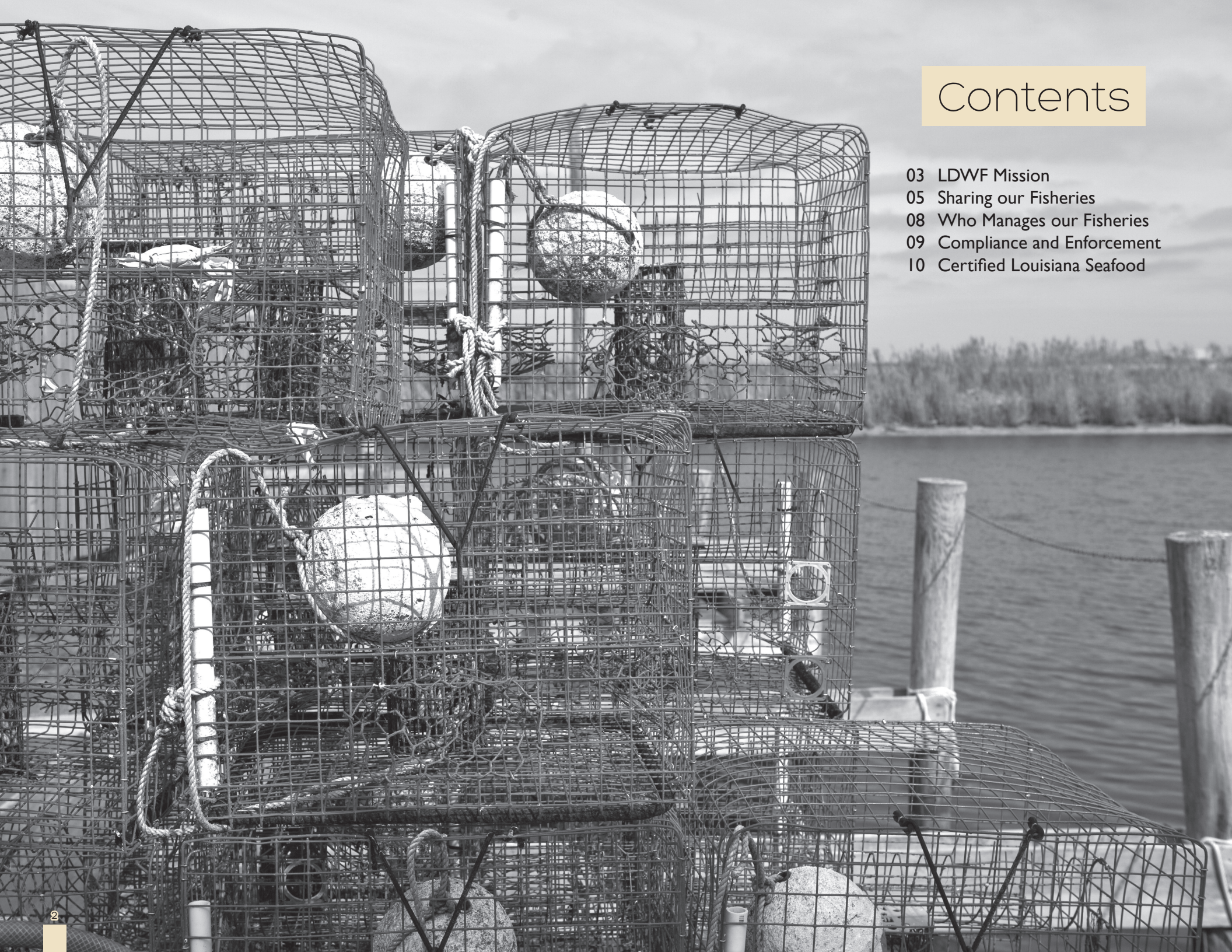
We Manage Fisheries

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries



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Our Mission

TO MANAGE LIVING AQUATIC RESOURCES AND THEIR HABITAT; TO SUPPORT THE FISHING INDUSTRY; AND TO PROVIDE ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND UNDERSTANDING OF LOUISIANA'S AQUATIC RESOURCES TO THE STATE'S CITIZENS AND OTHER BENEFICIARIES.

Our Goals

- To provide high quality fishery management information through effective data collection, analysis and communication.
- To be an effective, efficient steward of our aquatic resources.
- To provide and enhance recreational fishing experiences through improved access, opportunity and public awareness.
- To maintain a sustainable and economically viable fisheries environment.
- To create a work environment in which all Office of Fisheries staff are enabled and empowered to achieve the Office's goals and objectives.

FISHING AND SEAFOOD HAVE BEEN AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR CULTURE FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS. WE ARE DEDICATED TO CONSERVING OUR AQUATIC RESOURCES TO ENSURE FUTURE GENERATIONS CAN ALSO ENJOY THIS WAY OF LIFE.

Sharing Our Fisheries

A Shared Resource

Fish and shellfish are natural resources shared among many groups in Louisiana: from anglers catching redfish for sport and commercial fishermen shrimping for a living to people enjoying Louisiana seafood for dinner. These important fishery resources are renewable—they can reproduce and replenish their populations despite natural mortality and fishing. But they are not infinite—they must be harvested within certain limits to ensure they are not depleted over time. Fisheries management is the process of using science to determine these limits to ensure all groups can continue to share these resources for generations to come.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) is responsible for managing Louisiana's fisheries, maintaining healthy fish populations and habitat for the benefit of Louisiana's residents and visitors, both of today and tomorrow.

Fishery Management Terms

Natural Mortality: The annual rate of fish deaths due to natural causes

Fishing Mortality: The annual rate of fish deaths due to fishing pressure

Total Mortaility: The annual rate of fish deaths due to both natural and fishing mortality.

Good Data = Good Management

Responsible fisheries management starts with sound scientific information about fish populations and the ecosystems in which they live, as well as the fisheries that harvest them. LDWF biologists use a variety of methods to gather this information, including examining fishermen's catch (fishery dependent data) and conducting scientific studies (fishery independent data).

They later analyze and assemble this information into a stock assessment; a report on the status of the stock and fishery conditions. Managers use these reports to determine appropriate fishery management strategies, catch limits and other measures to ensure health of the resource.

Fishery Dependent Data

Fishery dependent data is collected from a fisherman's catch. LDWF requires commercial fishermen to submit trip tickets with information about their catch—what it is, where it was caught, how and how much was caught, etc. Staff also interview recreational fishermen about their catch over the phone or in-person at the dock. This information feeds into the national Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP), a system that collects and analyzes data from recreational saltwater fishermen to generate estimates for recreational catches.

Cutting Edge Research

LDWF is conducting a long-term acoustic telemetry study of spotted seatrout in Lake Pontchartrain. During 2012-2014, our biologists will surgically implant acoustic tags into the abdomens of two hundred adult spotted seatrout. They will deploy and monitor ninety acoustic receivers throughout the lake to record trout movement. This study will allow us to learn about the movements and habitat preferences of this important commercial and recreational fish.

We intensely study and actively monitor our fisheries resources. The abundance of catch data from our fishing community and independent sampling data from our biologists provides a solid foundation for responsible fisheries management.

Fishery Independent Data

LDWF biologists collect fishery independent data through planned scientific studies. They conduct sampling programs, catching fish with different types of gear and recording important information about their catch. Biologists count and measure their samples, and sometimes dissect them as well to determine age, dietary habits, and spawning potential. In some studies, biologists attach fish tags to their catch before they release them to better understand migration patterns, habitat needs, and other behavior.

Tags vary greatly in terms of their sophistication. Some record information such as depth, water temperature, and location and relay that data back to biologists via satellite. Other tags are simpler—biologists record a series of measurements for a fish, tag it, and release it. If a fisherman recaptures a tagged fish, they are instructed to call with information about the fish, which biologists compare with the data they previously recorded.

Public Input

We don't only base our management decisions on data from scientific studies and landing records—we also rely on input from the public. Our decisions directly impact our stakeholders, so it's important that we solicit their input as we define our management goals and strategies.

LDWF encourages public participation throughout the management process to not only ensure stakeholders' interests are considered but also to ensure they understand the regulatory process and resulting management actions. LDWF has established several task forces made up of commercial and recreational fishing constituents to review fisheries issues and discuss management alternatives. The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission meetings and our regulatory process provide and encourage opportunities for public input as well.

OUR MANAGEMENT TAKES INTO ACCOUNT CHANGES IN PRODUCTIVITY CAUSED BY NATURAL VARIABILITY AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS.

Who Manages Fisheries?

Because fish aren't contained by political boundaries, state, interstate, federal and even international authorities share fisheries management responsibilities. They support and advise each other and collaborate to ensure management is consistent across jurisdictions. Consistency promotes better conservation, eases enforcement and minimizes confusion for fishermen.

State Waters

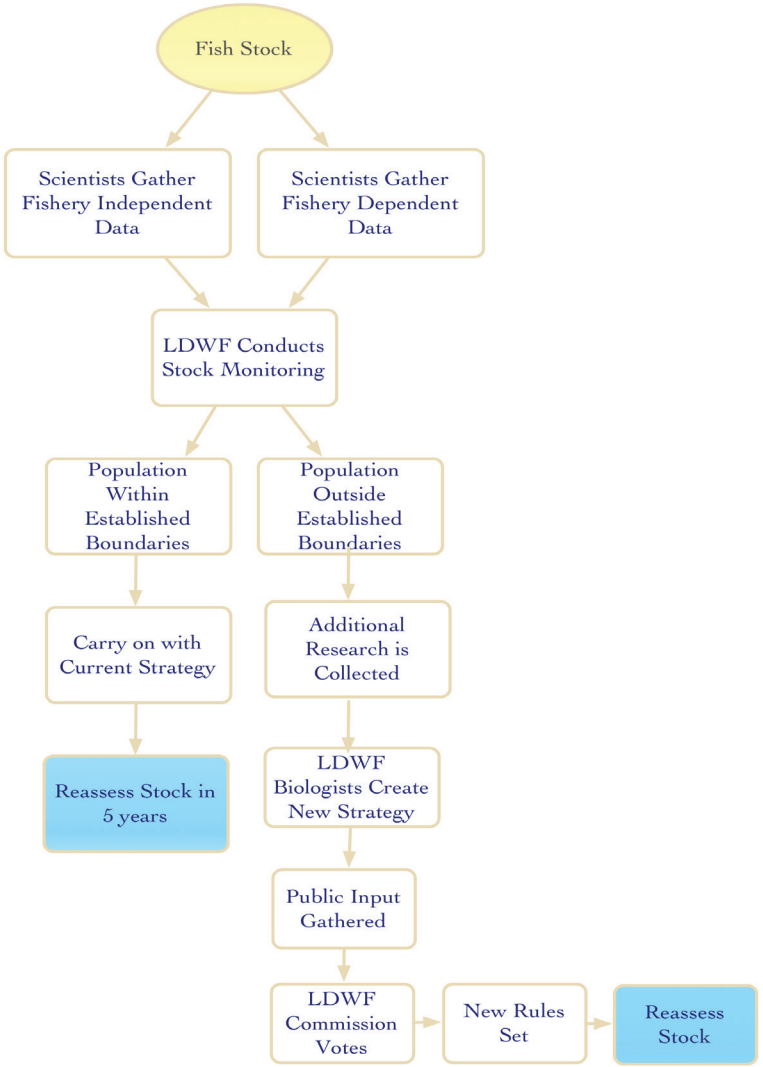
In Louisiana, LDWF is responsible for managing fisheries out to 9 nautical miles. The data collected by our biologists help fishery managers and administrators make strategic management recommendations to the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission. The Commission gathers public input, analyzes LDWF's recommendations and ultimately votes on how to achieve sustainable fishery management goals and objectives.

Interstate commissions help coordinate management of fish stocks that cross state boundaries, gathering scientific data and organizing strategies across the member states. The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission helps the 5 Gulf states standarize their data, manage their interjurisdictional fish stocks and make science-based management recommendations to state governors and legislatures.

Fishery Management Terms

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) – Federal water boundary that extends to 200 nautical miles from state water boundaries.

Fishery Management Plan (FMP) - A plan to achieve specified management goals for a fishery. It includes data, analyses, and management measures for a fishery.



Managing fisheries sustainably is a dynamic process. We must constantly and routinely adjust between what we learn from science and how we need to modify human behavior to respond to changes in the ecosystem and fish populations.

Federal Waters

When anglers and commercial fishermen travel beyond state boundaries they are subject to federal regulations set forth by federal fishery managers. The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and NOAA Fisheries are responsible for monitoring and managing fishery resources in Gulf federal waters (from state boundaries to 200 miles offshore). The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act guides how federal fisheries are regulated and how the regional fishery management councils should operate.

Compliance and Enforcement

LDWF, NOAA Fisheries and U.S. Coast Guard enforcement agents and officers ensure fishermen are complying with the rules and regulations in place to help protect fish stocks and their habitats. They use traditional enforcement techniques such as patrols and investigations to catch violators as well as simple outreach and education to prevent illegal activities. The most common fishing violations include fishing out of season, fishing in restricted areas and exceeding catch limits.

Fisheries Management Resources

Louisiana Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries
2000 Quail Drive
Baton Rouge, LA 70808
1-225-765-2800
www.wlf.la.gov

Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
2404 Government Street
Ocean Springs, MS 39564
1-228-875-5912
www.gsmfc.org

Gulf of Mexico Fishery Mgmt. Council
2203 N. Lois Avenue
Suite 1100
Tampa, FL 33607
1-888-833-1844
www.gulfcouncil.org

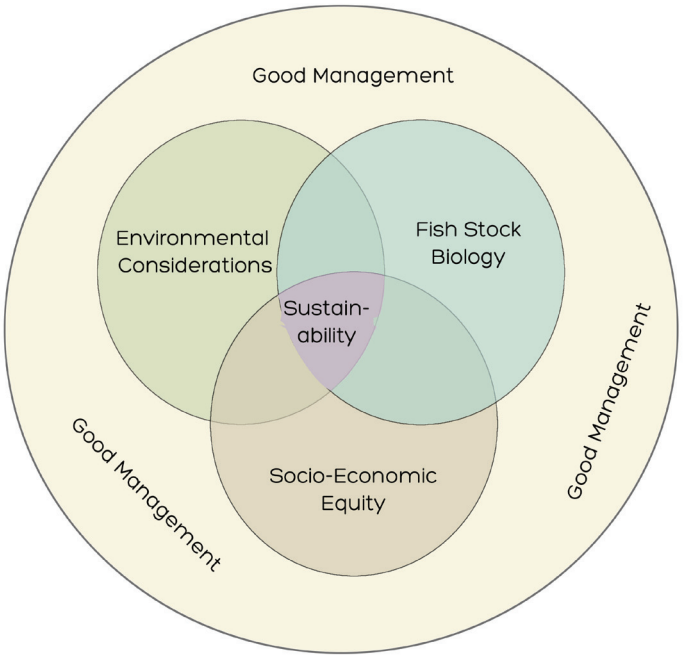
NOAA Fisheries
www.nmfs.noaa.gov

Responsible fisheries management isn't just the job of government entities. Many fishermen in Louisiana are multi-generational fishermen who grew up learning about the importance of conserving our valuable fisheries resources and now teach these responsible harvesting practices to their children. Their dedication to the stewardship of our natural resources ensures Louisiana's legacy of great fishing and delicious seafood.

Balancing All Factors

Fisheries management must be based on sound biological information about fish stocks, but must also consider other environmental and socioeconomic criteria. At LDWF, we know that responsible management of our fisheries must sustain our fisheries resources, the ecosystems in which they live, and the people that depend upon these resources.

It's important to better understand the impacts of man-made and natural factors on the broader ecosystem and evaluate potential implications of management decisions on the economy and our fishing communities.



Did you know?

At LDWF, our work extends beyond fisheries research and regulations. Alongside key partners, we work on a number of projects to enhance our fisheries, from gear research and habitat restoration to continuing education for our seafood industry and electronic seafood traceability. For example, LDWF recently implemented vessel monitoring systems and a pilot electronic time and temperature reporting program for our oyster fishery. These two innovative programs provide our managers and enforcement agents with real-time understanding of fishing effort, improving our ability to accurately monitor shell stock removal and compliance with FDA and Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals regulations.

Certified Louisiana Seafood

It's important for seafood buyers to support the seafood industry who follow the many rules and regulations that are part or our fisheries management framework. After all, without the commitment of our harvesters and processors, our management would be ineffective.

When seafood buyers see this logo on seafood packaging, restaurant menus, or grocery seafood displays, they know that the product is:

1. AUTHENTIC Louisiana seafood
2. From a responsibly managed, SUSTAINABLE fishery
3. TRACEABLE back to the harvester
4. Handled by TRAINED harvesters and processors
5. INSPECTED to ensure compliance

It's No Small Job

7,721
Miles of shoreline in Louisiana

70%
Of the seafood from the Gulf Coast is landed in Louisiana

13,000
Number of annual active commercial fishing licenses

$2.4 billion
Total economic impact of the Louisiana seafood industry

9,610
Number of otoliths aged at the Fish Assessment Lab in 2012

98
Number of offshore and inshore artificial reef sites

4,200,000
Number of fish stocked annually

444,651
Number of active Basic Recreational Fishing Licenses

#1
Louisiana is #1 in shrimp, blue crab, oyster, crawfish and alligator production

4,100,000
Number of recreational fishing trips taken in LA each year

129,000
Number of commercial fishing trips taken in LA each year

(landing 160 million pounds of seafood)

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Drop Us a Line

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Louisiana seafood is known around the world for the best taste, quality and variety. Not to mention, a world renowned reputation for our fishing. Rest assured the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries actively protects our fish stocks so our seafood and fishing can be enjoyed by future generations.