

# SEA HARVEST NEWS

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## Kemp's Ridley Recovery Continues

For the past several years we have been reporting the steady increase in the number of nests counted for the Kemp's Ridley sea turtle. The 8,323 nests reported in 2003 is up substantially from the 6,436 in 2002 and is more than ten times the numbers reported from 1982 to 1987.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NO. OF NESTS</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NO. OF NESTS</u>
1978	924	1991	1178
1979	954	1992	1275
1980	868	1993	1241
1981	897	1994	1562
1982	750	1995	1930
1983	746	1996	2080
1984	798	1997	2387
1985	702	1998	3845
1986	744	1999	3640
1987	737	2000	6277
1988	842	2001	5442
1989	888	2002	6436
1990	992	2003	8323

Source: Report on the Mexico/United States of America population restoration project for the Kemp's Ridley sea turtle, *Lepidochelys kempii* on the coast of Tamaulipas and Vera Cruz, Mexico, 2003. U.S Fish and Wildlife Service.

The number of nests is only an index of the population size and not a direct measure of the

population because Kemp's Ridley turtles may not mate until they are seven to 15 years of age, probably only nest every other year, and may nest two or three times in a single year. Kemp's Ridelys nest primarily at the Rancho Nuevo beach in Mexico but also nests on other beaches in Mexico and Texas. Last year, nests were also found in Florida and North Carolina.

## Derelict Crab Trap Removal for Saturday, March 13<sup>th</sup>

It's once again time for the annual crab trap cleanup. On March 13, all crab traps within 500 yards of the shoreline will be considered marine litter and can be removed by volunteers. Derelict crab traps can be dispensed of in dumpsters provided by the Mobile Bay NEP. Taking a crab trap at any other time or location is considered theft of property unless authorized by the Alabama Marine Resource Division. Anyone wishing to participate in the cleanup should contact Leslie Hartman (Marine Resource Division) at 251-861-2882.

## Imports Continue to Rise

Dispite the historically low shrimp prices, the flood of imported shrimp continues. For the period January through October, imported shrimp increased from 698 million pounds in 2002 to 745 million pounds in 2003. Annual Gulf of Mexico landings average around 150 million pounds.

## Reef Fishery Rebuilding Plan

The Sustainable Fisheries Act requires that fishery management plans contain specific information about over fishing and the maximum rebuilding time for populations. The current

approved fishery management plan for red snapper does not contain the required information and must be amended. The necessary amendments are technical in nature and, although a lower quota is one option, no change is likely in the commercial and recreational quotas. However, a new red snapper assessment is due this year and the results could trigger future changes in the quotas.

## Concern over Red Snapper Bycatch Continues

At recent public hearings, National Marine Fishery Service scientists continued to warn that meeting the required rebuilding goals for red snapper would be difficult without further reduction in shrimp bycatch of red snapper. According to scientists, bycatch reduction could come in two ways. A better bycatch reduction device for shrimp nets could be developed and / or continuing economic problems in the shrimp industry could reduce shrimping efforts resulting in less bycatch.

## Shrimp Promotion Underway

The Eat Alabama Wild Shrimp committee kicked off the first phase of the shrimp promotion campaign as the holiday season began. More information about the campaign and how to participate can be found at [www.eatalabamawildshrimp.com](http://www.eatalabamawildshrimp.com), or you can contact Lewis Communications at 251- 476- 2507.

