

# FAAC Annual Report

F U R   A N D   A L L I G A T O R   A D V I S O R Y   C O U N C I L ( F A A C )

## LOUISIANA'S FUR INDUSTRY

TABLE OF CONTENTS	
Louisiana's Fur	1
Louisiana's Alligator Industry	1
Legal Status of California Alligator Products	2
Washington D.C. Education	2
Retail Education	3
Fur Market Overview	3
International Trade Issues	4
State-wide Public Education	4
Council Goals & 2005-2006 Budget	5
Council History & Current Membership	6

From the early 1900's through the 1980's, Louisiana led the nation in the production of wild fur pelts. During the early 1900's the Louisiana fur industry involved over 20,000 trappers and 1,000 fur buyers and dealers. Muskrat populations exploded during that period with the harvest peaking at over 9 million pelts worth \$12 million in 1945. This production was more than occurred in all the other states combined. A much larger rodent, the nutria, was placed in captivity in the state in the late 1930s and escaped and/or was released into the near perfect habitat of

coastal Louisiana in the late 1930's. This South American native multiplied quickly and by 1962 surpassed the muskrat in numbers harvested. Between 1962 and 1982 coastal trappers averaged harvesting over 1.3 million nutria each year, representing over 64% of the total catch and 60% of the total value of the industry.

Louisiana produces 11 different species of furbearers (beaver, bobcat, coyote, gray fox, mink, muskrat, nutria, opossum, raccoon, red fox, river otter). During the past 10 years, the state has aver-

aged producing nearly 101,458 pelts annually down from 195,362. The average annual production of nutria during the past 10 years has been, 68,966 and raccoon 18,032. These two species alone provided nearly 86% of the value of an industry worth over \$600,000 annually to Louisiana trappers. **The annual fur harvest of all species has historically been valued as high as \$25 million to the state's trappers.**

## LOUISIANA'S ALLIGATOR INDUSTRY

Louisiana also leads the U. S. in the production of alligator skins. After rebuilding the population through research, management and law enforcement during the 1960's, the wild harvest from 1972 through 2006 has produced over 730,000 wild skins with an estimated dockside value of \$200 million.

This wild harvest has averaged approximately 32,176 skins annually, worth around \$9 million dockside including meat during each of the past 5 years. The 2006 wild harvest of 30,831 raw skins was valued at over \$11.9 million including alligator meat. In 2005, farmers sold 256,181 skins, which averaged 3.9 feet and were valued at over \$41.5 million. The farm/ranch harvest from 1972 through 2005 produced 2.99 million skins with an estimated value of \$291 million.



## LEGAL STATUS OF CALIFORNIA ALLIGATOR PRODUCTS



*Consumers can now purchase beautiful alligator shoes such as these in California with confidence that the product is both legal and sustainable.*

The California repeal of prohibitions against the sale of alligator and crocodile products was a headliner for the Louisiana Council programs in 2006-2007. The deletion of alligator and crocodile from Penal Code 653 was heralded by the international trade as a significant boost to US trade in crocodilian products because the California repeal restored confidence that landed or trans-shipped products would not be seized based on the outdated law. This confidence was particularly important to image conscious fashion houses, some who had ceased marking products as genuine alligator for fear shipments legally landed in New York would be inadvertently distributed or diverted to California.

Increasingly the demand for alligator and crocodile from fashion names like Hermes, Gucci, Louis Vuitton and Chanel have sparked a further increase in prices for both wild and farm alligators. While Louisiana had much to gain in California with a 60% market share of classic leathers worldwide (valued at more than \$50 million annually), the bill was drafted to include all crocodilians as an incentive to continue diverting world trade to legal sources.

The Marsh to Market success story of the alligator has encouraged many other countries to develop similar sustainable use programs that will benefit from the California repeal. The provision will sunset January 1, 2010 and be subject to a California review to determine if the trade remained legal, sustainable and verifiable.

## WASHINGTON D.C. EDUCATION

FAAC's Washington office initiated a new project to secure access to federal National Wildlife Refuges located in Southwest Louisiana for the purpose of conducting an alligator egg collection program to supplement the existing State program. Despite strong resistance from the federal Refuge management locally and at the Regional office, important steps forward were taken and progress made with the direct assistance of Congressmen Melancon and Boustany and their staff. Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries is preparing a formal program proposal for further discussions with USFWS and the Louisiana Delegation in the next fiscal year.

Efforts to secure additional funding from Congress for alligator disease research were substantially complicated by the increasingly partisan political environment in Congress as well as unprecedented revisions to Congressional earmark policy. Funding of \$100,000 was secured in FY06 for this research and an additional \$200,000 was included in the FY07 Senate appropriations legislation thanks to the efforts of Senator Landrieu, who sits on the Senate Appropriations Committee, with the strong support of Senator Vitter. However, this funding along with all Congressional earmarks was scuttled when the incoming 110th Congress chose instead to fund the government in FY07 through a long-term Continuing Resolution.

*Continued on next page*

**WASHINGTON D.C. EDUCATION CONTINUED**

Existing funding for this important research is sufficient to carry the research through at least August 2008. As it does each year, FAAC's Washington office has initiated the extensive process to secure funding in FY08 appropriations. The results of this high-quality research to date have been outstanding and this has helped FAAC maintain strong support from the LA Delegation.

Education of Congressional and Executive Branch officials on key FAAC issues remains a high priority. Over the years, many FAAC initiatives have benefited tremendously from the strong, active support of the LA Congressional Delegation. As a valuable adjunct to many the many ongoing meetings and briefings held in Washington, FAAC continued to invite key members of the LA Delegation and their staff to attend and participate in FAAC meetings in Louisiana. Similarly, FAAC has arranged for Congressional tours of key alligator farm and tannery facilities in Louisiana. These on-site venues have provided some of the most rewarding and effective opportunities for FAAC to educate and develop valuable, lasting relationships with our Louisiana Delegation.

**FUR MARKET OVERVIEW**

The wild fur market has improved due to a strong fur trim trade and global warming, which has reduced sales at the raw fur level. Louisiana's wild fur dealers have been able to sell all available furs to the Chinese and Russian markets. For example, a large international fur dealer, Bernard Stohn, who manufactures in China and sells in Russia bought skins from Louisiana this past year.

Michael Consiglio facilitated Louisiana nutria sells to our largest competitors in Argentina, because he recognized that Argentina had suffered a poor nutria harvest this year. Mr. Consiglio has also been working on a fur felt project which involves both Louisiana's nutria and beaver skins. This project should prove very beneficial to Louisiana's fur dealers through the upcoming year.

The Beijing Fur Fair was again very successful. Many Russians are buying directly from Chinese manufacturers. Louisiana's largest market remains in China, but the Eastern European market is growing steadily and may become an area of interest in the near future.



**B  
e  
i  
j  
i  
n  
g  
  
F  
a  
i  
r**

**FUR AND ALLIGATOR RETAIL EDUCATION**



*Saks' exotics skins display: Palm Beach location.*

Christine Maynard educates retail staff around the world about the marsh to market conservation story of Louisiana's alligators and the beauty of Louisiana Bayou furs. She incorporates messages from alligator hunters, fur trappers, farmers, tanners, manufacturers, and biologists into her program.

She provided alligator training in nine U.S. cities and three international cities this year with great success and special requests for encore presentations from several large retail houses.

Promoting nutria in Louisiana has been less successful, and there have been struggles with inconsistent pricing, availability and finished product quality. New directions are being considered to turn Louisiana's fur promotion program around.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE ISSUES

The Louisiana Council continues its International Alligator/Crocodile Trade Study (IACTS) in cooperation with the World Conservation Monitoring Center in Cambridge, England to annually review world trade in all species of crocodylians. An important aspect of annual review is to ensure that legal trade does not stimulate illegal markets to fill demand. Louisiana and the IACTS Project will prepare background reports and testify again in 2009 to uphold the California repeal.

The adoption of the CITES Personal Effects Resolution by the European Union's 27 member countries in 2007 provided a one-two market punch for enhanced trade in all crocodylian products. The Personal Effects Resolution was initiated by Louisiana during the 2002 CITES Treaty meeting in Chile and allows up to four crocodylian products to be carried by tourists as "personal effects". Previously, European travelers were required to obtain an import permit for the products before they left the country—a significant obstacle to legal trade that has been corrected in the US and EU. Japan has not fully implemented personal effects yet and an ongoing Louisiana Council goal is to ensure this important trading partner recognizes legal personal effects exemptions.

The 14th CITES Treaty meeting was held in The Hague, Netherlands in June, 2007 and the priorities accomplished for the Louisiana Council were to:

1) Reauthorize the Personal Effects Resolution and refer it to an intercessional Working Group; 2) Refer a small leather goods permit exemption proposal to a Standing Committee Working Group along with a review of the Universal Tagging System; 3) Monitor the down-listing of the Black Caiman in the Brazilian Amazon and 4) Monitor live trade exports in southeast Asia of Siamese crocodiles into China.

Considerable discussion was undertaken during the 14th CITES Meeting to find ways to further standardize and expedite the trade in legal crocodylian products. There was considerable interest for a further downlisting of the alligator under the Treaty and a certification process that could eliminate most of the CITES export and re-export permits for finished products. The favorable market impact of such initiatives would enhance and sustain the value of the alligator more than California and personal effects exemptions combined.

Clearly after 30 years under an Appendix II listing in CITES, the fact the alligator population increased in Louisiana from an estimated 200,000 to 2 million alligators and fostered a state industry worth more than \$50 million a year that is legal, sustainable and verifiable - is a testament to the Marsh to Market success story with benefits to people and wildlife.

## STATE-WIDE PUBLIC EDUCATION

The Fur and Alligator Advisory Council promotes wildlife management and interacts with students, teachers and the general public at events such as the Gonzales Sportsman Show, the Louisiana State Fair, the Louisiana Science Teachers' Association and Future Farmers of America. Volunteers and staff presented at 10 public libraries and 25 public schools, teaching children about conservation and native species. In addition to schools and libraries, the Council presented at 15 events.

A fifth grade educational book was completed this year and is available to teachers upon request. An alligator coloring book and several informational brochures were created for public distribution.

For a data CD of educational material, contact Tanya Sturman via the Council website: [www.alligatorfur.com](http://www.alligatorfur.com).



*Quentin Morris teaching 4-H students*

**T H E S P E C I F I C G O A L S O F T H E C O U N C I L**

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <p>1) To educate the public regarding the need for trapping as a sound wildlife management tool and regarding the logic of managing fur-bearing species and alligators as renewable resources.</p> <p>2) To identify the current consumers of Louisiana furs and alligator hides.</p> <p>3) To identify present and potential Louisiana fur and alligator marketing problems, obstacles, and related significant issues.</p> | <p>4) To strengthen existing markets and develop new markets and marketing strategies for raw and finished Louisiana fur and alligator products.</p> <p>5) To develop and implement an international advertising campaign to promote the utilization of raw and finished Louisiana fur and alligator products.</p> <p>6) To examine, evaluate and make recommendations concerning any aspect of the fur and alligator</p> | <p>industry including habitat management, harvest, and marketing that will enhance the future of the industry and perpetuate the conservation of these species.</p> <p>7) To make specific recommendations to the Secretary regarding the expenditures of monies from the Alligator Resource Fund including any annual surplus only as provided for in R.S. 56:279.</p> |
|--|---|---|

**2 0 0 6 - 2 0 0 7 B U D G E T**

The Fur and Alligator Advisory Council operates from three funding sources, Rockefeller Trust Funds, Alligator Resource Funds, and Education and Marketing Funds.

<b>Rockefeller Trust Funds</b>	
<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>\$150,000.00</b>
Travel	\$7,579.82
Operating Services- <i>i.e. cell phone, newspaper ads</i>	\$2,486.50
Supplies- <i>i.e. sample furs, sample products</i>	\$1,383.68
Professional Services- <i>i.e. fur promotion contract, retail contract</i>	\$138,550.00
<b>Rockefeller Trust Funds Expended</b>	<b>\$150,000.00</b>
<b>Alligator Resource Funds</b>	
<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>\$400,000.00</b>
Salaries and Benefits	\$32,612.62
Professional Services- <i>i.e. education contract, technical contract</i>	\$167,387.37
<b>Alligator Resource Funds Expended</b>	<b>\$199,999.99</b>
<b>Education and Marketing Fund</b>	
<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>\$100,000.00</b>
Salaries and Benefits	\$32,929.14
Travel	\$21,650.77
Operating Services- <i>i.e. cell phone, internet service</i>	\$21,246.15
Supplies- <i>i.e. printing supplies, office supplies, sample furs</i>	\$16,599.84
Professional Services- <i>education contract</i>	\$6,000
<b>Education and Marketing Funds Expended</b>	<b>\$98,425.90</b>
<b>Total FAAC Funds Budgeted</b>	<b>\$650,000.00</b>
<b>Total Expended</b>	<b>\$448,425.89</b>



**FUR AND  
ALLIGATOR  
ADVISORY  
COUNCIL (FAAC)**

1735 1/2 Washington St.  
Natchitoches, LA 71457

Phone: 318-354-1229

Fax: 318-354-9990

E-mail: t.sturman@suddenlink.net

***...Industries conserving species,  
habitats, and cultures.***

During the mid-1980s the Louisiana Trappers and Alligator Hunters Association began talking with the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries about the needs of the fur and alligator industries in Louisiana. This association working closely with representatives of major coastal landowners approached the legislature with a bill during the 1986 Legislature to begin positive action to address the problems facing these industries.

Act 455 (R.S.56:266) established all of the essential elements to begin addressing the problems facing the fur and alligator industries. The Act created a special fund designated as the "**Louisiana Fur and Alligator Public Education and Marketing Fund**". This Act spelled out 6 specific goals to be addressed through expenditures from this dedicated fund.

**The Louisiana Fur and Alligator Advisory Council (FAAC)** was created by the Legislature and is housed within that Department. This Advisory Council is responsible for reviewing and approving recommended procedures and programs to be funded from these dedicated revenues to insure that all expenditures are for the specific goals of the Act. The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is responsible for maintaining all the financial records of the FAAC.

**FUR AND ALLIGATOR  
ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS**

**Allan Ensminger, Chairman**  
Coastal Landowner Representative  
Term: 03/06/06 - 03/05/10

**Dan Davis, Vice Chairman**  
Southeast Louisiana Representative  
Term: 4/30/06 - 4/29/10

**Tommy A. Stoddard**  
House Designee  
Term: 3/30/07 - 3/29/11

**Samuel J. Smith**  
Statewide Representative  
Term: 3/23/04 - 3/23/08

**Charles Pettefer**  
Southwest Louisiana Representative  
Term: 04/30/06 - 04/29/10

**Johnny Price**  
Coastal Landowner Representative  
Term: 02/24/06 - 02/23/10

**Don Aycock**  
Senate Designee  
Term: 01/05/06 - 01/04/10

**Frank E. Ellender**  
Coastal Landowner Representative  
Term: 02/24/06 - 02/23/10

**Kevin Sagrera**  
La. Alligator Farmers and Ranchers  
Term: 04/13/04 - 04/12/08

**Gerald Savoie**  
La. Alligator Farmers and Ranchers  
Term: 03/23/04 - 03/23/08

**James Gallaspy**  
North Louisiana Representative  
Term: 04/30/06 - 04/29/10

**Marshal Klump**  
La. Alligator Farmers and Ranchers  
Term: 08/22/05 - 08/21/09

**Nathan Wall**  
La. Alligator Farmers and Ranchers  
Term: 08/22/05 - 08/21/09