

Louisiana - Aquatic Invasive Species report to GSARP, April 2017

LDWF Office of Fisheries

Apple Snail:

During 2016, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) received over 300 calls reporting apple snail infestations and with the mild winter it appears they will continue to spread more rapidly and distant in 2017. The extreme flooding that occurred in SE Louisiana during August 2016 provided excellent expansion conditions. They have now been observed in 23 of the states 64 parishes and entire sections of freshwater marsh are now being reported as “eaten out” in some of the coastal parishes. Additionally, waterfowl hunters and fur trappers are reporting significant declines in ducks and fur bearers on their leased/owned lands where apple snail infestations are severe. Inland Fisheries Section staff of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) along with the USGS Wetland Research Center, Nicholl’s State University and the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program will continue to research and monitor for this species and is currently conducting regular public educational outreach thru several media outlets. One such outlet is thru the LDWF Aquatic Invasive Species hotline.

Asian Carp:

Asian carp continue to be a problem in Louisiana’s big rivers where populations of bighead, black, grass, and silver carps they are now successfully reproducing in the Atchafalaya, Mississippi, Ouachita and Red rivers. They continue to slowly spread into smaller coastal river drainages at this time. Asian carp have the potential to cause extensive and irreversible changes to the aquatic environment, negatively impacting the long-term sustainability of native aquatic species, public use of natural resources, and the economic value of aquatic resources. Ongoing research includes impacts the carp may be having on native fishes of similar trophic level. LDWF is continuing to monitor the status and spread of these species in state waters.

Tiger Shrimp:

In 2016 LDWF received 21 reports of tiger shrimp from commercial and recreational fisherman catches along the Louisiana coastline from the Texas state line to the Mississippi River. The sightings were in nearshore/bay areas during the months of August and September.

**Lionfish:**

LDWF dive teams performed 52 roving diver surveys at three standing platforms during summer months from 2012 – 2015. Surveys were conducted at platforms from 30 to 40 nautical miles offshore of Grand Isle. Dives were limited to 120 feet deep (recreational dive limits). Species richness accounted for 28 families and 84 unique species of fish including the invasive lionfish, which was sighted during 63% of all dives. During 2016 several reports of recreational hook and line catches were received by LDWF.

Aquatic Weed Control Program:

The program is housed within the LDWF's Inland Fisheries Section. Aquatic plant control plans were developed for 73 different waterbodies during 2016. Giant salvinia continues to be the most problematic AIS plant in Louisiana. Since 2008, LDWF has treated an average of 20,000 acres of giant salvinia per year with herbicides. LDWF uses an integrated approach to control aquatic plants, consisting of chemical, physical (drawdowns), and biological (insects and grass carp) methods. LDWF has an annual Aquatic Plant Control budget of \$8,000,000 of which more than 50% of that is spent on giant salvinia alone for monitoring, treatment, and research.

Report compiled by Bobby Reed – Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator