Lagniappe

May 2026 • Volume 50, No. 5

The end of the Spring 2026 semester marks the successful completion of the School of Renewable Natural Resources' Principles of Aquaculture Course at LSU. As many program alumni will recall, the Ben Hur Aquaculture Research Station has long stood as one of the largest and most productive aquaculture research facilities along the Gulf Coast. However, over the past decade, the station has experienced periods of disrepair and neglect, diminishing the university's capacity to conduct cutting-edge research and train the next generation of aquaculture professionals.

Under the leadership of Kaelyn Fogelman, Ph.D., the school's newest faculty member in Fisheries and Aquaculture, the Ben Hur Station is now experiencing a renaissance; once again serving as a hub for student engagement, coursework and applied research. This newsletter, produced by undergraduate and graduate students in Fogelman's Principles of Aquaculture class, highlights the critical role of hands-on, applied learning experiences. It underscores the enduring importance of the Ben Hur station as both a cornerstone of experiential education and a vital asset for stakeholder-relevant research across the LSU system.

Spring 2026 Edition
LSU Aquaculture Research Station
School of Renewable Natural Resources
Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, Baton Rouge, LA

The purpose of this newsletter is to highlight the lectures, laboratory experiments and maintenance at the Aquaculture Research Station during spring 2026. These are the highlights of Fogelman's first semester teaching the Principles of Aquaculture class, RNR 4022.

Kaelyn J. Fogelman and her RNR 4022 '26 students after the first day of data collection for the crawfish hypoxia experiment.

Sea Grant LOUISIANA
A Joint Publication of Louisiana Sea Grant and LSU AgCenter
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Crawfish Hypoxia Experiment

Project Relevance:

The southeast U.S. is facing an increased frequency and magnitude of drought conditions, resulting in high temperatures and low dissolved oxygen (DO) in aquaculture settings, which present persistent challenges for crawfish. Warming water holds less oxygen, and Louisiana's shallow crawfish ponds can reach temperatures approaching 30°C and DO levels near zero during the growing season. High temperatures and low DO can limit crawfish survival, growth and reproduction in natural and commercial production. Oxygen sources in aquatic systems include plant photosynthesis, diffusion of air across the water's surface, water exchange and mechanical aeration. However, management of DO in U.S. crawfish aquaculture is limited due to increased energy costs. Using grow-out trials, we observed the effect of low DO, or hypoxia, on the growth and survival of the red swamp crawfish, *Procambarus clarkii*, under controlled DO conditions.

Ben Jumonville (LSU AgCenter '27, NREM) and Julia Morin (M.S., LSU AgCenter '26, RNR) testing water quality parameters using the photometer.

A crawfish being weighed during biweekly measurements.

Madison Wray (LSU AgCenter '26, NREM) and Madison Reddick (LSU AgCenter '27, NREM) working together to remove and collect crawfish from one of the raceway tanks to be weighed, measured, and counted.

Brooke Grubb, Ph.D., showing Jordan Holcomb (M.S. LSU AgCenter '27) how to swab red swamp crawfish gill chambers to collect data for a concurrent study analyzing the effects of hypoxia on gill microbiomes.

Experimental Overview:

Juvenile *P. clarkii* were stocked in outdoor tanks and exposed to two treatments: continuous aeration or no aeration, then allowed to grow from February through April. Temperature and DO were measured twice daily, and tanks were assessed for molts and mortalities. Biweekly measurements assessed growth and survival through weight and length measurements. This study will provide insight into the consequences of hypoxia exposure on *P. clarkii*, providing performance-informed DO targets for aquaculture management, highlighting the importance of DO management in crawfish aquaculture.

A subset of crawfish were used in a concurrent assessment of gill microbial community patterns in relation to hypoxic conditions of the crawfish host. Brooke Grubb, Ph.D., (George Washington University) visited to teach us how to properly swab a crawfish gill chamber, a protocol which we completed twice. Results are pending analysis by Grubb. This experience was a great example of the collaborative nature of science, as Grubb is in Washington, DC.

Preliminary Experiment Results

Preliminary student data, analyses, and interpretations. Full analysis and publication forthcoming.

What Did We Find?

The average biomass in the aerated and hypoxic tanks increased over time, but the average biomass in the aerated tanks was significantly higher than that in the hypoxic tanks from week two onward. Mortality was observed with both treatments; however, the aerated tanks lost fewer individuals overall than the hypoxic tanks. The aerated tanks also had a lower feed conversion ratio, averaging 0.24 g fed/g gained, while the hypoxic tanks averaged 0.33 g fed/g gained. This means that the individuals in the aerated tanks converted feed to biomass growth more effectively. The results show that the aerated tanks had greater biomass growth, higher survival and more efficient feed conversion than hypoxic tanks.

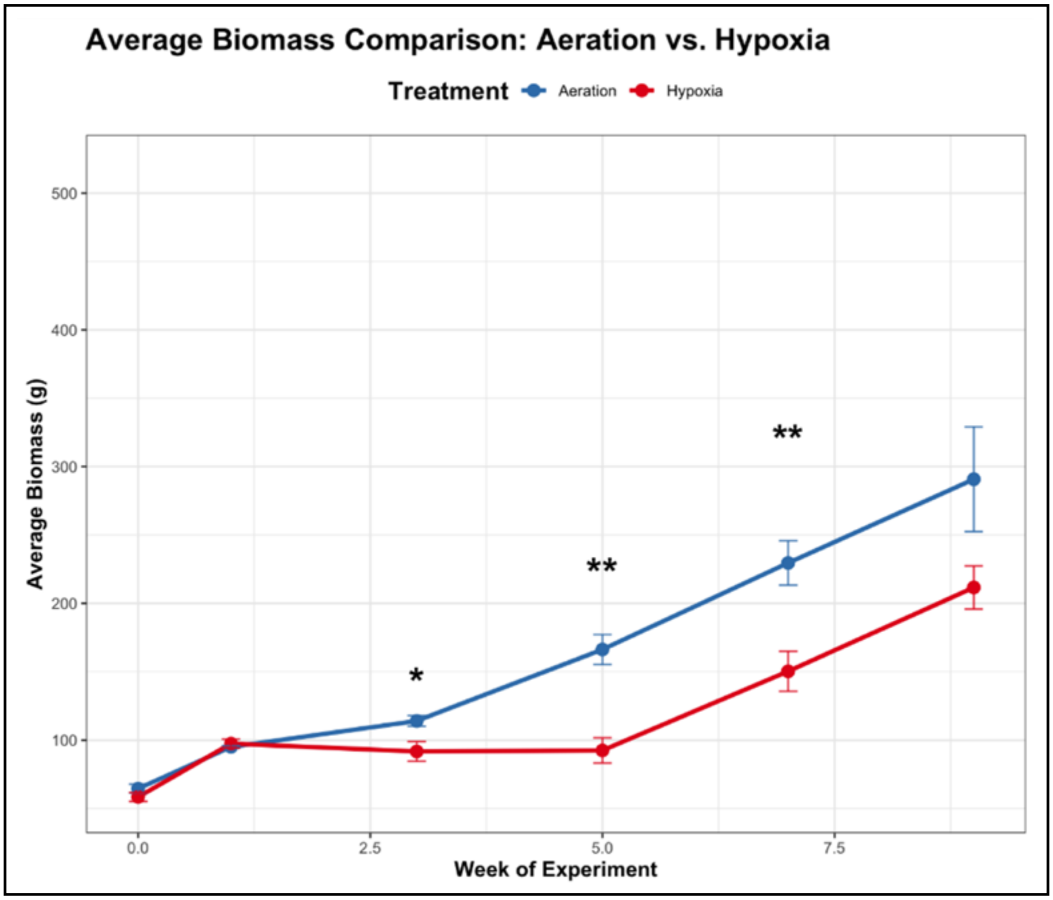


Figure 1. Mean survival, or number of individuals, over time under aeration and hypoxia treatments. Points show the weekly average number of individuals across tanks, with lines connecting the points. Error bars with each point show one standard error above and below the average for each treatment across weeks. Two asterisks indicate a p-value less than 0.01 from a two-sample t-test comparing the difference between average biomasses across treatment each week.

These results highlight the physiological limits of *P. clarkii* and the importance of DO management in commercial crawfish systems. Even though the species is often described as tolerant of low oxygen, our controlled grow-out trial showed that chronic exposure to hypoxic conditions can reduce growth and survival. From a species-management perspective, we were reminded that "tolerant" does not mean "invincible."

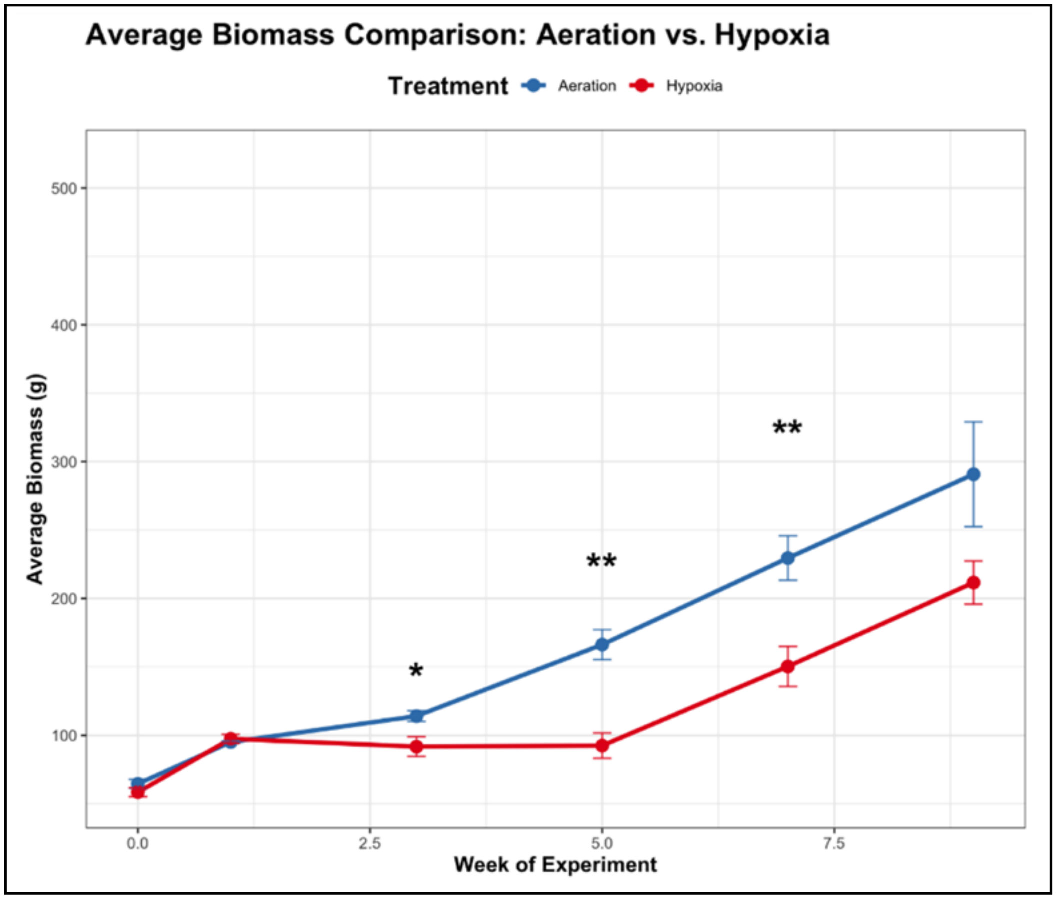


Figure 2. Mean biomass in grams across treatments, aeration and hypoxia, across the nine weeks of the experiment. Points represent the measured biomass from that week, with lines connecting each week. Error bars with each point show one standard error above and below the average for each treatment across weeks. One asterisk above a week indicates a p-value less than 0.05 from a two-sample t-test comparing the difference between average biomasses across treatment each week. Two asterisks indicate a p-value less than 0.01 from the same t-test.

What Did We Learn?

Looking back at the hypoxia experiment, the clearest lesson was how tightly water quality, management decisions, and animal performance are linked in a real aquaculture system. Originally, each tank and treatment started with roughly the same biomass. However, the aerated tanks' biomass increased far more than that of the hypoxic tanks, highlighting how subtle differences in conditions compound over time. Seeing real biomass and feed ration data attached to real DO trends made that concept concrete.

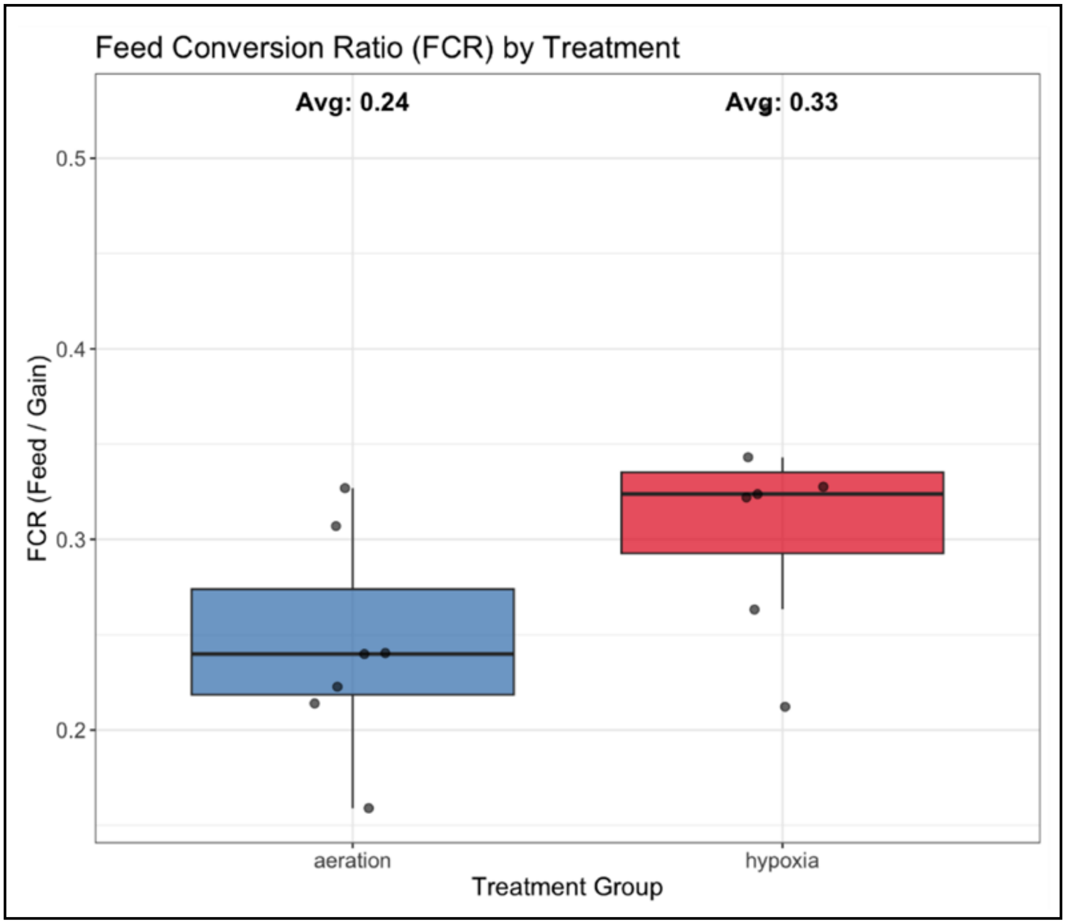
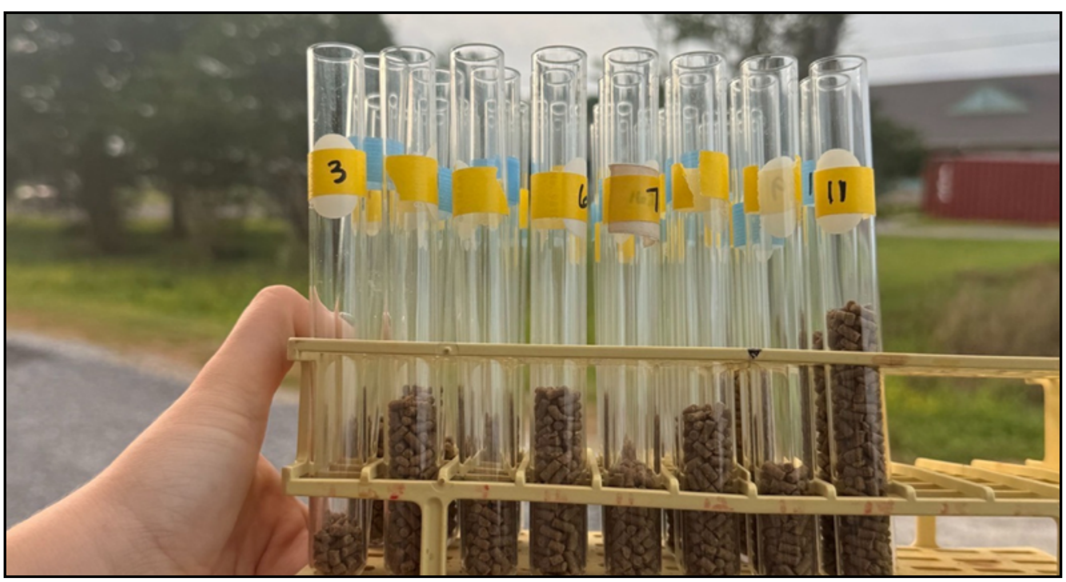


Figure 3. *Feed conversion ratios (FCRs) by treatment group, aeration and hypoxia. FCRs were calculated by dividing the total amount of feed given by the total amount of biomass gain over the study period. Total biomass in grams is the sum of biomass in the respective treatment tanks from the end of the study subtracted by the sum of biomass from the initial stocking. Total feed in grams is the summed amount of food given to each treatment throughout the study. Each treatment's FCR is represented by a boxplot with the median and interquartile range. Black points represent the FCR of each individual tank.*



Fogelman holding the nightly feed for all 14 raceway tanks after a hypoxia experiment group work day, with amounts based on half of 5 percent of the total biomass per specific tank.

The raceway at the Aquaculture Research Station where the 14 tanks, half aerated and half non-aerated, are located and kept covered to minimize risk of crawfish loss due to predation.

Participating in this experiment taught us how to manage live animals, collect accurate data, follow consistent sampling protocols and problem-solve. We gained valuable hands-on experience by participating in husbandry tasks such as feeding and testing the water quality. These are all core skills for anyone entering the aquaculture field that transfer to any commercial operation.

Principles of Aquaculture (RNR 4022) '26 with Fogelman (left) and Grubb (second from left) at the Aquaculture Research Station "Raceway Tanks" at the end of another Friday lab spent participating in the crawfish hypoxia research project.

Spring 2026 Guest Lectures

***Clint Lloyd** is associate director of Research and Extension at the E.W. Shell Fisheries Station, within Auburn University's School of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Aquatic Sciences. He is also the president of the Alabama Chapter of the American Fisheries Society. Through his talk he detailed his experiences working and leading the largest aquaculture station in North America and described best practices for earthen pond construction and management.*

***Kurt Guidry, Ph.D.**, is the Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station associate director. He is also a professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness at LSU. Through his talk, our class learned the ins and outs of crawfish production and economics. This included costs of production, sales, co-culture of crawfish and rice, and challenges within the industry.*

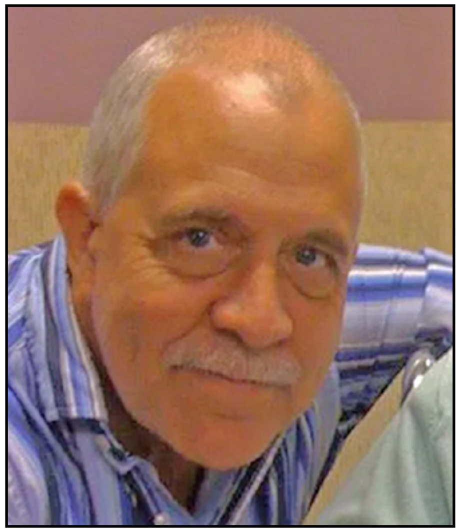
***Lynn Kennedy, Ph.D.**, is the Cresent City Tigers Alumni Professor and department head in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness at LSU. He taught our class about the international trade economics of the aquaculture industry. We learned about how price, demand and supply are related and ways the U.S. catfish industry is supported by government trade regulations.*

***M.P. Hayes, Ph.D.**, is an assistant professor at the School for Plant, Environment and Soil Science at LSU. He is also the water quality specialist at Louisiana Sea Grant. Hayes' talks highlighted pond dynamics and all the factors that work together to influence the water quality in pond systems.*

***Alexis Weldon** has a Master of Science from the School of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Aquatic Sciences from Auburn University. She studied shrimp nutrition and feeding practices. Her talk explained different feed considerations in aquaculture systems, including feed types, quality, visibility, palatability, nutrition and more. We learned about how feed drives production and water quality, and how to choose the right feeds and amount of feed for our aquaculture species.*

***Timothy Bruce, Ph.D.**, is an assistant professor of Aquatic Animal Health at Auburn University. Bruce taught our class about fish health and disease in production systems. We discussed fish immune systems, how to determine if there might be a disease affecting your fish, and common bacterial, parasitic and viral infections in fish. We talked about disease prevention and treatment in aquaculture systems.*

***Elizabeth Robinson, Ph.D.**, is the director of Louisiana Sea Grant's Oyster Lab and Michael C. Voisin Oyster Hatchery on Grand Isle. She is also an adjunct professor in the Department of Environmental Sciences at LSU. She taught us about the oyster life cycle and what the hatchery process is like for oyster production. We discussed how hatchery produced oysters can be used for restoration and the off-bottom oyster industry.*



***Greg Lutz, Ph.D.**, is a professor at LSU working in state-wide extension commercial aquaculture as well as recreational and ornamental residential pond management. Lutz gave our class a lecture on Louisiana aquaculture in which we learned about how aquaculture in Louisiana has changed over the years and its different sectors of production. We discussed all the different species produced including turtles, catfish, crawfish, etc.*

***Kayla Boyd, Ph.D.**, is a project manager working on the Oyster Restoration Project ongoing in Mobile, Ala. Boyd introduced our class to the Holistic Oyster Restoration Plan (2025-2030) that works to defend and revive Mobile Bay's oyster reefs. Beginning with a brief introduction into the history of oyster restoration in the bay, Boyd discussed three ongoing projects that aim to increase larval input in the upper and lower bay and combine industry experience to advance restoration.*

***Mark Shirley** is a retired Louisiana Sea Grant and LSU AgCenter marine extension agent, specializing in the Louisiana alligator industry. Shirley presented an interactive experience for our class, providing knowledge of the alligator industry, as well as a first-hand look at alligator consumption. He taught us how important Louisiana alligators are in aquaculture and prepared them as a snack for the class. Thousands are harvested from the marshes every year for consumption and the utility of their skin, but there are many regulations in place to promote conservation of the species and habitat.*

***Todd Fontenot** is an extension agent working in the LSU AgCenter to connect local crawfish farmers with researchers. Fontenot presented a lecture on crawfish aquaculture and production, covering key production strategies, including stocking and harvesting techniques, along with an overview of the industry itself. Louisiana crawfish aquaculture has been standing for many years using red swamp crawfish and white river crawfish.*

***Jim Stoeckel, Ph.D.**, is an assistant professor in the School of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Aquatic Sciences at Auburn University. Stoeckel lectured us on the conservation practices in freshwater mussel aquaculture. We learned about the relationship between freshwater mussels and the fish hosts they need for larval survival and challenges both species face in their environments. We learned about the mantle lures that freshwater mussels use to attract these fish hosts. Stoeckel showed us how both freshwater mussels and their hosts are reared in aquaculture systems.*

Principles of Aquaculture '26 class sitting behind the LSU Renewable Natural Resources building listening to Shirley present on the alligator industry both in and out of Louisiana, who also provided alligator nuggets for the class.

Principles of Aquaculture class '26 listening to Boyd present her work with oyster restoration and the Holistic Oyster Restoration Plan (2025-2030).

Aquaculture Research Station Cleanup and Workdays

RNR 4022 '26 students Eliana Vargas (LSU AgCenter '27, NREM), Cade Johnson (LSU AgCenter '26, NREM), Kathryn Motley (M.S. LSU '26, ENVS) and student worker Maya Bond clearing out the marine research building to gain interior access to start restoring its functions.

Over the course of the semester, our class not only learned about the principles of aquaculture, but the reality of a job in the field. We learned how to use landscaping tools such as string trimmers, loppers and zero-turn mowers. One Friday, a group of students used a combination of loppers, hedge trimmers and electric pruners to clear brambles and vines from an overcrowded area. We successfully cleared a path to a specific transformer that needed maintenance by the end of the day. Additionally, we trained and supervised on operating a zero-turn mower and string trimmers to clear the overgrown vegetation around the main aquaculture building while other students raked the excess vegetation into piles for removal. Another accomplishment was cleaning and clearing out the vegetation that covered the pump that's connected to the big pond, which now has power and runs.

Our class also helped with the crawfish hypoxia experiment. Before we could officially start the experiment, we had to prepare the tanks. This included removing unnecessary clutter, moving tanks and removing screens from tanks. Removing the screens was difficult as many were stuck to the tank. Through trial and error of testing different methods, we finally found that using a hammer while pulling up successfully removed the screen. Once the screens were removed, we were able to finish setting up the air stones that provide aeration to the tanks.

We spent a few lab days restoring the mesocosms' functionality as well. Mesocosms are tanks used to create small-scale ecosystems for experiments to replicate natural environments. There were more than 13 mesocosms lined up at LSU Aquaculture that dirt and vegetation had accumulated in, rendering them unusable. We first cleared any clutter from around and inside the tanks, sorting them into reusable material and trash that we threw away. Over the course of a few Friday labs, we used shovels to remove the dirt and vegetation from five mesocosms so they are ready for use. A basic estimation of the number of pipes in the plumbing system connecting water to the tanks was done as well. This work aided in getting the mesocosms ready for forestry experiments and for future aquaculture experiments.

Our aquaculture workdays occurred on the last Friday of every month, and we noticed in the few weeks between every cleanup, the vegetation had already grown back. It showed us that maintenance is constant in this field, and it is not something to be overlooked. We also realized that it is very difficult to do any of this alone. We learned that if we work together as a team, we could accomplish a lot in a short amount of time. Overall, we were able to get a lot done, whether it was for setting up for the experiment, clearing up vegetation to be able to use buildings or tanks, or just regular vegetation control; we learned a lot about the maintenance side of aquaculture to be able to keep a system rolling as well as learning to work together to accomplish a common goal.

RNR 4022 '26 students Elizabeth Plauche (LSU AgCenter '26, NREM), Ben Jumonville (LSU AgCenter '27, NREM) and Julia Morin (M.S., LSU AgCenter '26, RNR) with student worker Ali Morris clearing mesocosms to be used for experiments by removing accumulated dirt and vegetation.

Louisiana Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit assistant unit leader and RNR adjunct assistant professor, Drew Fowler, Ph.D., trains Principles of Aquaculture student, Elizabeth Plauche (LSU AgCenter '26, NREM), on operating a pressure washer to get equipment in service for station maintenance

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What We Learned

Throughout the semester, we studied aquaculture as the farming of aquatic organisms, such as fish, mollusks and crustaceans, requiring active human intervention, such as stocking, feeding and protection, to enhance production. Often described as "underwater agriculture," aquaculture converts low-cost inputs into high-value protein, and it has now surpassed wild capture fisheries as the primary source of global seafood. This efficiency is largely due to the aquatic environment, where ectothermic organisms expend less energy on structural support and more on growth compared to terrestrial animals.

The clearing by the marine research building that RNR 4022 students made by clipping and removing thick, overgrown vegetation to access the power line to restore power.

A major focus was water quality as the foundation of successful production. We emphasized the "Big Four" parameters: dissolved oxygen, temperature, ammonia/nitrogen and pH/alkalinity. Using Shelford's Law of Tolerance, we learned that organisms perform best within an optimal range and experience stress or mortality outside it. We also examined the nitrogen cycle, where toxic ammonia (NH_3) and nitrite (NO_2^-) are converted by nitrifying bacteria into less harmful nitrate (NO_3^-), highlighting the importance of biological filtration.

We also compared different production systems, ranging from low-input earthen ponds to highly controlled recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS) that reuse more than 90 percent of their water. Cage culture was another key system, offering flexibility and efficient harvesting but presenting challenges like biofouling, which restricts water flow, reduces oxygen availability and allows waste buildup.

RNR 4022 '26 students Madison Reddick (LSU AgCenter '27, NREM), Victoria Denham (M.S. LSU AgCenter '27, RNR) and Farren Gilleland (LSU AgCenter '27, NREM) preparing the raceway and tanks to conduct the hypoxia experiment.

Furthermore, we also explored growth and carrying capacity, defined as the maximum biomass a system can support. This is limited by water quality, food availability and system design. Using the bioenergetic model, we learned that growth is the remaining energy after metabolic costs are met. A key concept was metabolic scaling, meaning smaller fish have higher metabolic and oxygen demands per unit weight, producing more waste and placing greater stress on the system. These principles connect directly to the disease triad, where fish health depends on the interaction between the host, pathogen and environment, reinforcing the importance of balanced system management.

The course reinforced that aquaculture success depends on understanding interactions between water quality, organism biology and management decisions. Factors like dissolved oxygen, temperature and ammonia fluctuate daily, requiring constant monitoring and adjustment. Management strategies such as feeding rates, stocking density, aeration and water exchange directly influence system performance. We saw how increasing feed can boost growth but also increase waste and stress if not properly managed, emphasizing the need for informed, data-driven decision-making.

Julia Morin (M.S., LSU AgCenter '26, RNR) and Jordan Holcomb (M.S., LSU AgCenter '27, RNR) swabbing crawfish gills to assist Brooke Grubb, Ph.D., a post doctorate associate from George Washington University, in their research about the effects of hypoxic conditions on crawfish gill microbiomes.

RNR 4022 '26 students weighing red swamp crawfish and measuring crawfish carapace length with calipers to record biomass data for the hypoxia experiment.

Conclusions

This course taught us that successful aquaculture relies on the ability to connect different parameters, including water quality, management practices and organism biology. We learned how key parameters like dissolved oxygen, temperature, ammonia and pH can directly affect an organism's growth, health and survival. We also learned how these specific conditions can change overtime and throughout the day. This course also placed a strong emphasis on different management strategies. We learned about adjusting feeding rates, controlling stocking density, water changes and even using different kinds of aeration. We got to witness first-hand how management decisions can change the overall performance of an aquaculture system. We learned how increasing feed can improve growth but also increase stress within the system if not carefully managed. Overall, the course helped us better understand that aquaculture takes informed decision making alongside with monitoring data and responding to different challenges to keep the organisms and system productive.

Ben Jumonville (LSU AgCenter '27, NREM) and Madison Reddick (LSU AgCenter '27, NREM) collecting crawfish with nets to be weighed and measured.

The sun setting at the Louisiana State University Aquaculture Research Station.

Together, the facility maintenance and experimental work done at the research station provided a comprehensive introduction to the practical, technical and biological aspects of aquaculture, reinforcing the essential role of both system upkeep and careful animal management in successful production. We were able to apply the knowledge we gained in the classroom from Fogelman and guest lecturers directly in a real-world aquaculture setting, while contributing to important research underway at LSU.

Student Contributions

Kathryn Motley (M.S. LSU ‘26, ENVS) and Victoria Denham (M.S. LSU AgCenter ‘27 RNR) wrote and gathered pictures for the guest lecture section.

Julia Morin (M.S, LSU AgCenter ‘26, RNR) was responsible for gathering all content, editing and design of the newsletter.

Elizabeth Plauche (LSU ‘26, NREM) and Farren Gilleland (LSU AgCenter ’27, NREM) wrote the aquaculture station clean up section and figure captions.

Benjamin Jumonville (LSU AgCenter ‘27, NREM), Calista Kalishek (LSU AgCenter ’27 NREM) and Cade Johnson (LSU AgCenter ‘26, NREM) wrote the what we learned and concluding sections.

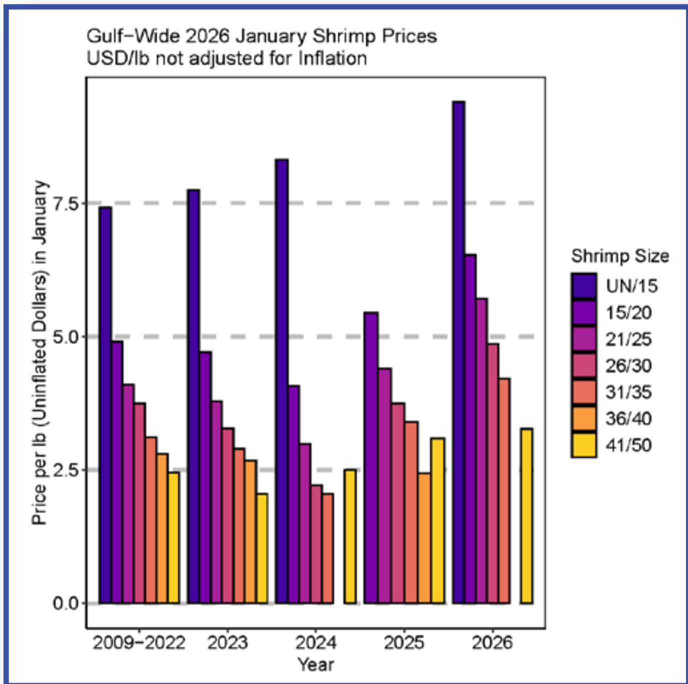
Jordan Holcomb (M.S, LSU AgCenter ‘27, RNR) wrote the overview for the crawfish hypoxia experiment.

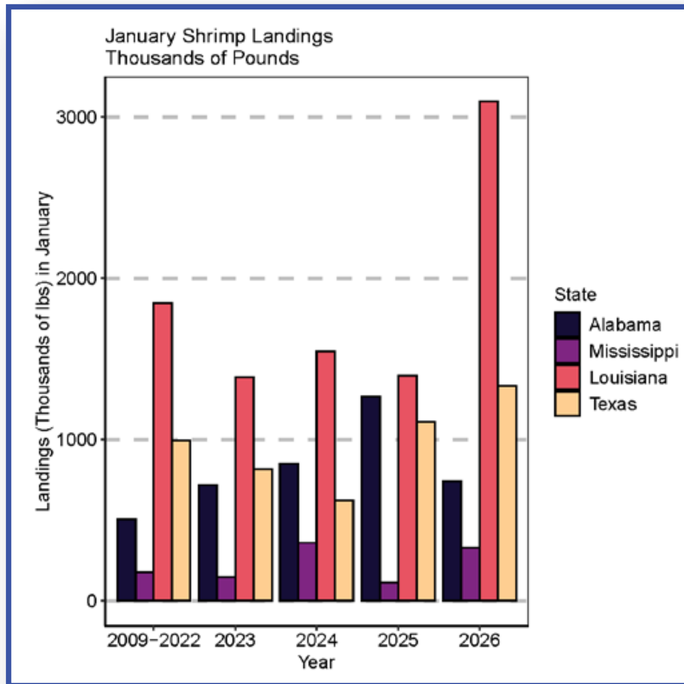
Madison Reddick (LSU AgCenter ’27, NREM) and Eliana Vargas (LSU AgCenter ‘27, NREM) assisted with gathering pictures, final edits, and the PowerPoint.

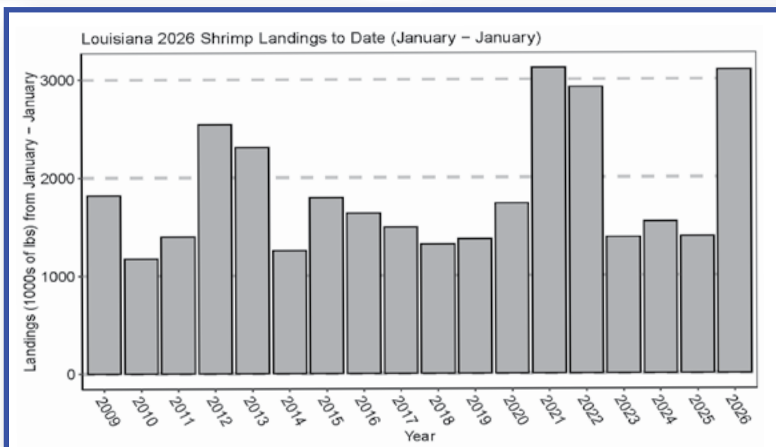
Madison Wray (LSU AgCenter ’26, NREM) analyzed data, wrote results and created figures for the crawfish hypoxia experiment.

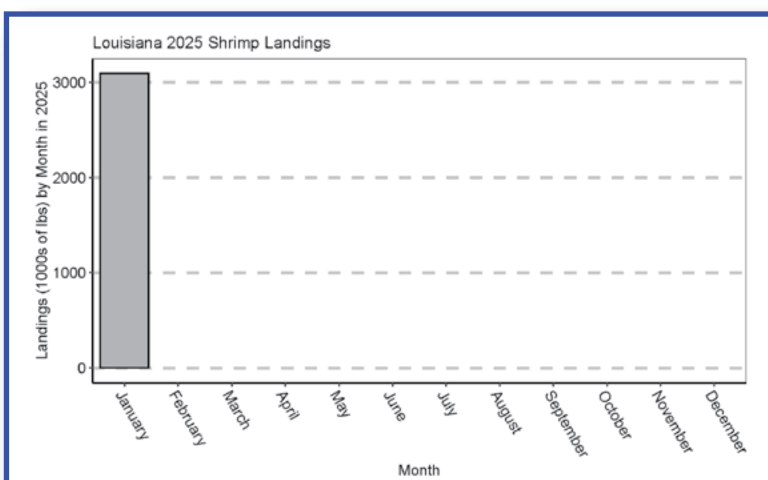
Louisiana Shrimp Watch

The shrimp watch data for the May issue includes data through January 2026. All landing data is based on trip ticket data provided by Gulf States Fisheries Commission and no estimations have been made.









The Gumbo Pot

Seafood & Sausage Gumbo Recipe

Recipe provided by Addie K. Martin, chef for Culicurious
Prep: 35 min   Cook: 3 hours   Total: 3 hours, 35 min

INGREDIENTS:

1 cup all-purpose flour
1 cup canola oil
3 cups diced onions (about 2 onions)
1 cup diced celery
1 small green bell pepper, diced
4 cups sliced okra (can use frozen)
1/4 cup minced garlic
1/2-pound smoked sausage, cut into coins
1-pound fresh chicken and duck sausage, casings removed
4 cups shrimp or chicken stock
8 cups water
1 pound shrimp, peeled and deveined
1 cup oysters with liquor
Kosher salt and cayenne pepper to taste
Garnish: 2 cups sliced green onion

METHOD:

In a large stock pot, heat oil over medium high heat. Once oil is hot, add flour using wire w hisk.

Stir this constantly for 20 minutes until rich dark brown – do not scorch; if you see black specks, discard and start again.

Once the roux is at the desired level of darkness, add the okra and a little salt and sauté in the roux for about 15 minutes.

Add onions, celery, bell pepper and garlic and sauté about 5 minutes or until veggies are sufficiently wilted.

Add sausages and blend well into veggies – cook about 2 minutes or so.

Add in the shrimp stock and water slowly, stirring constantly as you add and keep stirring until everything is mixed well. Adjust seasonings at this time – check salt and pepper.

Bring the gumbo to a rolling boil then reduce to a simmer for 2 hours. Cover the pot. Stir every so often to make sure the gumbo doesn't stick to the bottom of the pot.

15 minutes before serving, add in shrimp, oysters and green onions – stir well.

Serve over cooked rice and with potato salad and French bread. C'est bon!

Get roux as dark as possible before adding in anything else because it's going to come out much lighter than it looks in the pot. As long as you don't have black specks, it is not burnt. Keep going. It could take longer than 20 minutes depending on the flame you are using.

Meats – these are the meats I chose. Use any that you want. Sky's the limit really. Some people rather tasso, chicken and/or other seafoods. Use your imagination. Add in delicate seafoods at the end, though.

You can use all stock instead of cutting it with water, but it gets kind of expensive so I make my own stock beforehand with the shrimp shells then use water for the rest. I season very well so my gumbo can tolerate water as a base liquid.

Please make sure you are seasoning throughout and not just at the end. That's the key to very flavorful food.

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We would like to hear from you! Please contact us regarding fishery questions, comments or concerns you would like to see covered in the Lagniappe. Anyone interested in submitting information, such as articles, editorials or photographs pertaining to fishing or fisheries management is encouraged to do so.

Please contact Lagniappe editor Jeffrey Plumlee at *jplumlee@agcenter.lsu.edu*

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Be sure to visit the *Lagniappe* blog for additional news and timely events between issues.
https://louisianalagniappe.wordpress.com/

Lagniappe Fisheries Newsletter

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