

AAC Annual Report

ALLIGATOR ADVISORY COUNCIL

Louisiana's Alligator Industry

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Louisiana 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 2014 has produced over 975,000 wild skins. The alligator industry, including the wild harvest, egg collection, and farm raised alligators, in 2014 has generated in excess of \$100,000,000 in economic benefit to the state of Louisiana.



The wild harvest has averaged approximately 32,974 skins annually, worth over \$10.3 million dockside including meat during the past 5 years. The 2014 wild harvest of 35,945 alligators was valued at over \$13.6 million which includes the value of the alligator meat. In calendar year 2014, farmers sold 341,887 skins, which averaged 25.68 cm belly width, which were valued at over \$80 million and included the value of the alligator meat. Since 1986 the Louisiana Alligator ranching program has collected over 8.5 million eggs and returned over 947,000 healthy alligators back to the wild.

Despite the worldwide economic crisis in 2009, which initially reduced the price and demand for alligators, the value of genuine Louisiana alligators has continued to recover and is approaching 2008 values.



Washington D.C. Education

The report from Washington, D.C. at this time last year was that the 113th Congress was doomed to be among the very least productive in its history. Unfortunately, that story came true. Commenting on the results of the annual report of the Bipartisan Policy Center of which they are co-chairs, you may recall former Senate Majority Leaders Trent Lott (R-MS) and Tom Daschle (D-SD) had proclaimed “...*the Senate has degenerated into a polarized mess...*”.

This year, the Center has painted a somewhat brighter picture of the first six months of the 2-year 114th Congress in which the Republican Party has secured the majority in both the House and now in the Senate. Indeed, the Senate has worked a few more days this year than it did in the beginning of the 113th Congress in 2013, and the new Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) appears to be using procedural maneuvers for partisan purposes to limit debate and block amendments at a lower rate than Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) did when he was Majority Leader in the last Congress. More importantly, several major national policy bills have been enacted with bipartisan support. As described by former Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME), another co-chair of the Center, “*After years of being moribund, Congress at least has a pulse.*”

So, have things improved sufficiently to improve the prospects for AAC’s and FAC’s Washington agenda? Yes and No.

The good news is that, thanks to the leadership of newly elected Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA) working with longtime fur and alligator industries champion Senator David Vitter (R-LA), the Senate Appropriations Committee (of which Sen Cassidy is a member) has yielded a Fiscal Year 2016 funding bill that for the first time in more than a decade identified alligator disease research as a funding priority for the Animal and Plant Health Information Service (APHIS) under the US Department of Agriculture. Some years back, APHIS had long partnered with the LDWF in funding the pioneering research conducted by LSU’s Dr. Javier Navarez in close coordination with the alligator industry. Further work with Senators Vitter and Cassidy will be needed to ensure that the Appropriator’s directive to APHIS will generate a specific grant to Louisiana, but taken in the context of the past decade of Congressional dysfunction, the 2011 ban on earmarks, and the overall budget constraints of this era, this must be seen as an important breakthrough.

That said, the bad news is that a deep partisan divide has erupted in the Senate over the sequestration rules adopted in the 2011 Budget Control Act, and whether those automatic spending reductions should apply to the Defense Budget. The net result at the moment is a promise by Senate Democrats to block the full-Senate adoption of any and all FY 2016 appropriations bills until this impasse is resolved – if ever. That includes the same FY 2016 Appropriations Committee bill that contains the alligator disease research provision. It’s far too early in the process to tell if or how the FY 2016 spending process will proceed, but having the commitment and

leadership of Louisiana's Senators behind this initiative is, of course, crucial and greatly appreciated.

While Senator Cassidy's affinity for Louisiana's fur and alligator programs and industries-- as well as his position on the Senate Appropriations Committee-- bodes well for the AAC and FAC agendas, we must recognize it comes with the loss of Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA). Senator Landrieu held the AAC, FAC, the Department, and Louisiana's fur and alligator industries in very high regard. Her numerous initiatives and many years of support will never be forgotten. She was firmly committed to the FAC and AAC agendas and delivered results time and time again. Of course, Senator Vitter's extraordinary leadership will also be missed as he pursues his run for the Governor's office.

On a brighter note, with the guidance of LDWF Assistant Secretary Jimmy Anthony and Biologist Director Buddy Baker, the AAC and FAC have revitalized their longstanding partnerships in Washington with various wildlife management organizations including especially the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) to join forces against extremist environmental and animal rights groups to advance their anti-hunting and trapping agendas on the domestic front and internationally at CITES. For example, this partnership has worked well in Congress to prevent any forward progress on legislation re-introduced in both the House and Senate this year to prohibit trapping on National Wildlife Refuges. Internationally, this team is working with other like-minded Nations, indigenous peoples groups, and other key organizations to defend the core principles of sustainable use at CITES.

Overall, despite the partisan environment and the countless other challenges that always complicate getting anything done in Washington, DC, the picture seems brighter than it has for years – certainly as compared to the previous Congress.



Education on the Hill

Technical Representation

The Council contracted with Ashley and Associates to represent the alligator industry at national and international meetings. The most important and surprising Technical Representation news during this fiscal period was the signing of California legislative bill AB2075 by Governor Gerry Brown, extending the exemption for crocodilian products. Secretary Barham's and Professor Grahame Webb's (CSG) sent letters to the Governor, confirming strong Louisiana range state and international support to extend the sunset to January 1, 2020. Both the Beverly Hills Chamber of Commerce and California Retailers Association also followed up with direct appeals to Governor Brown to sign AB2075, which received more than two-thirds favorable votes from the legislative chambers. The third extension of the California sunset provision (2006, 2009, and 2014) means the Alligator and Crocodile exemptions in the historically anti-wildlife trade and pro-animal rights state will span 13 years when the current extension expires at the end of 2019.

It will be important to maintain engagement in the interim with the sponsor of AB2075. Luis Alejo, and Don Ashley has discussed several options with him and staff including an opportunity to visit Louisiana next year during nesting season, see the marsh, alligator farm and sustainable benefits to commerce, conservation and communities.

The Alligator CITES Case Study being presented to all regional Fish and Wildlife Agencies of AFWA will be a very effective way to improve the understanding of policy-makers about the benefits of sustainable use to conservation (wetlands and natural habitats) and communities (local people and cultures). Louisiana's long standing commitment to CITES, participation in the IUCN Crocodile Specialists Group (CSG) and the IACTS trade monitoring report continues to provide a strong foundation for the alligator programs continued success.

The 2014 IACTS Report (trade data thru 2012) was completed this year. Classic skins again exceeded 600,000 skins (652,422 in 2012) with the alligator accounting for 50% of total world trade within 326,571 skins. Another notable increase in classic trade was a 22,000 skin increase in the Nile crocodile trade to 195,155 skins in 2012 accounting for 30% of total classic trade. The Saltwater crocodile trade also increased by 17,000 skins accounting for 11% of total classic trade. These species continue to account for about 90% of total world trade in classic skins.

Colombia again exceeded the unofficial quota of 600,000 *Caiman fuscus* skins in 2012 (625,422 skins). This is the third year (2010-2012) Colombian exports of this species exceeded the maximum number most experts believe are possible from captive-bred production. This issue (laundering wild skins thru captive breeding operations) is not new and, as the CSG emphasized during their Lake Charles meeting, must be directly addressed by the Colombian CITES Management Authority and farming operations. The problem is magnified by Colombia representing 83% of the total caiman trade and 44% of the 1.4mil crocodilian skins in trade for 2012.

Some progress to address the continuing problem in Colombia concerning laundered wild skins through farms came during the CSG Cambodia regional meeting. Colombia is expected to submit a new workplan for the conservation and management of the Brown Caiman (*C.fuscus*). This is more important from a CITES compliance perspective than as a conservation issue since this is a very productive species.

The Colombia workplan will likely include a start toward a ranching component which would provide more benefits to conservation (wetlands habitat protection) and a disincentive for illegal trade (laundering). Both Colombian CITES authorities and caiman farming representatives have worked together to draft the workplan for CSG consideration.

The biggest change in the crocodylian meat trade continues to be the Siamese Crocodile exports to China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore. Exports of meat from this species averaged about 35 tons from 1999-2003 but again exceeded 250 tons in 2010, 300 tons in 2011, and 350 tons in 2012. The export of Siamese crocodile skins remained almost the same in 2011 and 2012, at about 35,000 skins. The export of live Siamese Crocodiles to China declined again in 2012 to 15,330 animal, down by more than 75% of the 2006-2007 trade of more than 71,000 animals a year. CITES and CSG attention continues to be focused on this Appendix I species, particularly emerging trade from farms in Cambodia and Vietnam. The 2015 regional CSG meeting will be held in Cambodia. Another round of CSG consultations with range states Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam will again focus on necessary remedial actions to mitigate further pressure on already scarce wild *C. siamensis* populations.

Initiatives to encourage the FWS to build upon the Masterfile permit systems for alligator farmers and manufacturers through electronic permitting systems stalled in 2014. The primary reason was the Service's position that the original CITES permit must accompany a shipment. Efforts continue to find a way to satisfy FWS concerns over e-permitting, which continues to be supported by many CITES Parties. At the least, we should engage the FWS to look at ways to expedite electronic reporting of alligator trade data. The goal should be to reduce the lag time of two years for CITES reports for most of the crocodylian trade to one year for the alligator. Ultimate goal would be to achieve almost real time electronic reporting of the alligator trade, which would also be a significant step toward certifiable trade.

While science and institutional frameworks (enforcement, compliance and trade monitoring) remain important so does the need to better tell the Marsh to Market story to policymakers and the public. Louisiana continues to work with those in the trade interested to compliment Louisiana's efforts spanning four decades. The next five years, culminating with the 2019 expiration of the California Sunset clause, will prove to be crucial to the alligator trade and other sustainable use programs for crocodylians as well as other reptiles.

LSU School of Human Ecology

The Alligator Council contracted with the LSU School of Human Ecology to promote manufacturing with lower grade alligator skins. During the beginning of July, Dr. Liu traveled to Wuxi, Jiangsu province. She visited Jiangnan University and industrial park to promote Louisiana Produced Alligator Skins. She delivered a seminar to share alligator skin related research results and also shared BIFT students' design collection. She also discussed with faculty in the college of Textile Sciences, and Apparel Engineering about the possibilities to get their top students involve with creative design using alligator skins. The proposed idea was well received by faculty and students in Jiangnan University. If possible, Jiangnan University is willing to establish a design studio to promote Louisiana produced alligator skins too.

Between July 14 to 17, Dr. Liu traveled to Guang Zhou to participate a local tradeshow to explore market potentials of Louisianan Alligator Skins joining the Bizhishen International Trade, LLC. Bizhishen is also the master licensor for producing and selling Ford Apparel and Accessories in China. As all the other apparel business in China, the whole domestic market is shrinking due to national policies change and industrial structure adjustment. However, the company still wants to explore market of American Alligator Skins, especially, with strong intention to develop environmentally friendly and safe high end product lines.

In July, Dr. McRoberts met with Mickal Adler of Adler jewelers via telephone. As a result, she conducted a market study of products on the market that could be made into alligator products that support his white alligator jewelry line as an accessory. Adler also showed an interest in producing and selling one of the BIFT design student's purse design. However, concerns were raised about cost effectiveness and barriers in getting the products out of China and back into the U.S.

On August 4, Dr. Liu visited BIFT to explore how to collaborate on the next round alligator project. BIFT suggests having a two-week workshop to have both BIFT and LSU faculty and students to participate together on creating a few alligator product collections. BIFT also is willing to look for a manufacturer sponsor to set an alligator skin design studio. Dr. Liu also visited the possible space for the studio.

On August 5, Dr. Liu visited Beijing-Based World Trade Center trying to get manufacture sponsor for the BIFT design studio. She connected with two businesses with intention to sponsor the studio.

On August, 6, Dr. Liu brought the two companies' representatives to visited BIFT to further explore the implementation and cost for sponsoring such a design studio in BIFT. One of the two companies showed strong interests to join this project.

On August 12, PI Dr. McRoberts held a telephone conference with Adler to brainstorm ideas for the design of pieces to go with his white alligator collection in No-

member. Dr. McRoberts developed new sketches and ideas to send to him via email. A few ideas included a contemporary travel jewelry case, an alligator jewelry roll, an alligator jewelry box with cypress sides, and a cypress tree set upon an alligator base to serve as a jewelry stand to hold the necklaces, etc.

In September, Co-PI Chuanlan Liu and Pi Lisa McRoberts gave an in-depth interview that made the front page of the Reveille. McRoberts talked about the grade 3 Louisiana alligator project from the design aspect. More specifically, she discussed the student garments incorporating the grade 3 Louisiana alligator hide. Additionally, she discussed and demonstrated the graduate students grade 3 Louisiana alligator products.

Liu discussed how the ongoing project on promoting American wild alligator leather has been incorporated into design and merchandising classes. She also discussed the project tried to build a win-win relationship between Louisiana Alligator Council and LSU Textiles, Apparel Design, and Merchandising Department. The article was featured on 9/24/14 and can be seen on the following url http://www.lsureveille.com/daily/lsu-student-designers-use-alligator-skins-in-apparel-designs/article_cdecd36a-4437-11e4-ab49-001a4bcf6878.html

In late September, both investigators traveled to New Iberia and presented the annual report at the Alligator Council meeting.



In October, both investigators traveled to Charlotte, NC to attend and participate in the annual International Textiles & Apparel Association (ITAA) conference.

ITAA Conference

McRoberts met with apparel design professors and instructors to continue the creative collaboration of designing and constructing grade 3 LA alligator garments. Dr. Liu promoted the Alligator project to increase awareness of Louisiana produced wild alligator skins in several ways: (1) wore an alligator skirt designed by a previous TAM design professor to attract attention and then talked about Louisiana Produced alligator skins; (2) built collaboration with scholars from other universities to further conduct a large-scale empirical research on promoting Louisiana produced wild alligator skins.

LSU School of Human Ecology Continued

In November, McRoberts worked with an undergraduate student to incorporate grade 3 LA alligator hide into her three-dimensional draping project.

In November, Liu and McRoberts developed and submitted a research proposal, *Symbolic in-branding: A strategy to promote American wild alligator leather in global consumer markets*, to compete for LSU faculty research grant.

In January, Dr. Liu and I collaborated with a visiting design scholar from China, to design a grade 3 LA alligator garment primarily incorporating alligator scraps. I will continue to meet with her and walk her through the creative design process documenting each step so as to prepare a design submission to the International Textiles & Apparel Association in June.

In January, Dr. Liu re-designed and proposed the field study course-HUEC 3030-2 with the goal to recruit at least 10 LSU students in design and merchandising in summer 2015.

As proposed in the field study course, LSU students would travel to China to work with fashion/accessory students in Beijing Institute of Fashion and Technology, the top fashion design institute in China. Students would form a group to team up with Chinese design students to create garments and accessories. Dr. Liu had already worked out two major manufacturers/brands sponsoring the workshop by providing supporting materials and production facilities. I developed the program through closely working with Beijing Institute of Fashion and Technology (BIFT). The proposed collaboration agreement would have students' design work using alligator skins shown in BIFT fashion week in October 2015 or Beijing Fashion Week in March 2016.

In February, gave senior students in HUEC 4045 and newly appointed professor, Dr. Casey Stannard a demonstration on working with the alligator and how to sew with the leather.

On February 26, 2015 McRoberts' creative scholarship garment incorporating grade 3 LA alligator, *Rendering Lagniappe: A Little Something Extra* was accepted into an international design exhibition showcase for the American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences: Advancing the Field with New Technology annual conference to be held in Jacksonville, FL in June 24-27, 2015.

In March, researchers, directed Chinese designer and exchange graduate student, Le Xing, through a sustainable design process to develop an alligator garment comprised of grade 3 alligator scraps. The process was documented throughout.

In March, Dr. Liu was unable to recruit 10 LSU students to offer the developed HUEC 3030-2 field study course. Dr. Liu discussed with her collaborating team in Beijing Institute of Fashion and Technology and decided to select the best design students from

BIFT to work on this project and establish an alligator skin product design studio at BIFT for long-term collaboration in promoting Louisiana produced alligator skins.

Dr. Liu developed a research paper based on previously developed LSU faculty research grant proposal with a graduate student and Dr. McRoberts as co-authors for submission to the International Textiles and Apparel Association for the annual 2015 conference. The paper was accepted for annual conference presentation in Santa Fe, NM November 2015. Dr. Liu and Dr. McRoberts also gathered pilot data on co-branding of alligator with fast fashion brands such as H&M before May 2015.

Dr. McRoberts prepared and submitted an abstract regarding the alligator workshop developed and conducted for educators, designers and students for presentation with Dr. Liu's assistance. On April 9, 2015 the American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences accepted research proposal, *From Marsh to Market: Educating Educators on Design Practice of Sustainable and Natural Resources: Case Study Grade 3 Louisiana Alligator Garments and Products*, for presentation at the annual conference.

On May 11, 2015 a panel of judges, Anne Petrie Underwood, Josh Holder, Gwen Graves, and Raoul Blanco, evaluated all of the alligator garments and alligator products to determine the award winners of the Marsh on the Catwalk Alligator Competition.



First Place Award

Second Place Awards

As soon as school and the fashion show were completely finished, Dr. McRoberts started working on alligator promotion through the development of an alligator creative scholarship collaboration piece. Also, she contacted her collaborators to check on the status of their creative scholarship pieces. Only one was prepared to submit to the International Textiles & Apparel Association for 2015.

On May 13, 2015, in conjunction with the student organization Hemline sponsored Catalyst annual student fashion show, the Marsh on the Catwalk Alligator Design Garment and Product Competition was presented. The first place grade 3 LA alligator garment award went to Jane Gressaffa. The second place grade 3 LA alligator garment award was tied and awarded to Elly McGlauchlin and Eric Prestley.



LSU School of Human Ecology Continued

So, it was decided to submit the alligator garments either to the AAFCS in January 2016 or ITAA, 2016.

Dr. McRoberts prepared the abstract and paperwork for the collaborative piece made by Le Xing for entry into ITAA's creative scholarship call. McRoberts also collaborated with Le Xing and Dr. Liu to get that piece submitted to ITAA for the June 5, 2015 deadline. Dr. McRoberts wrote the abstract paperwork because she directed Le Xing through a specific theoretical framework, which was followed throughout the process.

During June, Dr. McRoberts contacted both Lectra and Optitex to schedule her 3D training. Unfortunately, the Lectra training was not offered in July, 2015. The Optitex license was renewed. Dr. McRoberts also explored the possibility of attending the leather trade show in New York, but was unable to gain access.

Dr. McRoberts traveled to Jacksonville, FL from June 24-27, 2015 and presented an alligator research presentation at the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences. Her alligator creative scholarship garment was also accepted and displayed in the design exhibition.

The previous year's manufacture sponsor, Bizhisheng Trade LTD could not sponsor the project due to a change in ownership. During May and June, Dr. Liu connected with Shanghai Hansen I/D Co. LTD through her network in China. Hansen L/D Co. LTD was willing to work on getting the 20 pieces of alligator skins donated by Heng Long Leather Co Pte Ltd ship to Beijing. However, in the middle of process, Dr. Liu had to quit working with Shanghai Hansen I/D due to the high service fees, which were estimated at a total amount of \$8,000 (50,000 RMB). The project's budget could not afford such expensive service fees.

During late June and July, Dr. Liu worked on searching new manufacture sponsors and she finally convinced the China's leading hatting brand, Shengxifu to sponsor the project collaborating with the Beijing Institute of Fashion and Technology. Dr. Liu and her team in China had to restart a new round of paper work, documents, and export and import permissions. Once the donated skins are shipped to BIFT, student designers will be selected to participate in a hat/accessory design competition. Winning pieces will be put into market (flagship store in the famous commercial street, Wangfujing Street and Shengxifu online store) to test market acceptance while promoting consumer awareness.

Currently, Dr. Liu is also working on developing a research grant submitted to Louisiana State Board of Regents. The proposed research focuses on promoting locally produced agricultural products, such as alligator skins using ingredient branding and co-branding approaches.

2014 - 2015 Expenditures

The Alligator Advisory Council operates from the Alligator Resource Funds.

Alligator Resource Funds	
Budgeted	\$358,779.00
Salaries	\$29,976.48
Related Benefits	\$16,595.00
Travel	\$321.74
Operating Services- <i>i.e. cell phone, internet service</i>	\$1,563.57
Supplies- <i>i.e. printing supplies, office supplies</i>	\$1,769.54
Professional Services- <i>i.e. , technical contract</i>	\$225,375.00
Other Services– LSU Agricultural Center/McNeese State	\$60,141.50
Alligator Resource Funds Expended	\$335,742.83
Remaining	\$23,036.17



Louisiana Alligator
Advisory Council

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