Area crawfish farmer makes crawfishing easier task

Church Point is known as the 'Buggy Capitol of the World'. It's neighboring community of Higginbotham might become known as the 'Crawfish Buggy Capitol of the World'.

A retired house mover, who has turned to the crawfish farming industry, came up with the idea of a crawfish buggy. He though up the idea, made his plans and work on the project got underway.

The one man operation in crawfishing is the brainstorm of Harold Wingate of Higginbotham, a small community South of Church Point. Wingate designed and built the buggy, working on his project at a shop near his home. The work on the buggy began in September and although he worked part-time had the buggy in operation the first part of December. After putting his buggy together Wingate found a few improvements to his actual plans. The adjustments were made and all is running well with the invention.

The buggy is run by a 20 horse power Kohler Motor with 15 gallons to the minute hydraulic pump. It has hydraulic steering which is like power steering.

The buggy wheels and frame were made by Wingate. The back end of the buggy is constructed from an old three-quarter ton pick-up truck. The four foot wheels are 12 inches wide in the back, while the front wheels are 6 inches wide. The back wheels are cleated making it easier to move through the crawfish fields.

The buggy has a covering to protect the farmer from the weather.

Harold Wingate invents crawfish buggy

The crawfish season in this area last for about six months, sometimes a little more and sometimes a little less. A lot of time and hard work is put into the industry by the crawfish farmers. Wingate has 50 acres of crawfish ponds. The buggy makes crawfishing easier and faster.

"In some fields we lay down twelve hundred sixty traps and run (that is empty and bate the traps) from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sometimes we get 24 sacks of crawfish out of the field," Wingate said. "You can easily understand how using this buggy would make the job easier" he said.

The driver seated on the right side of the buggy drives his buggy alongside the line of traps laid out in the field. He picks up a trap, empties it on a tray directly in front of him. At this time the crawfish are graded with the larger crawfish falling into a sack and the smaller ones falling back into the pond. The traps are re-bated and dropped into the water. This operation continues until all the traps are emptied. There is no time that the farmer has to get into the water, saving him from getting cold and wet during the winter crawfish season.

The buggy is neatly painted and would make someone curious as to what this invention could be when they see it parked alongside the Wingate home or in a crawfish pond.

Maybe someday in the near future the job of crawfishing will become easier, this made possible by Wingate's invention.