Crawfish processors face waste disposal problem

by Henri C. Bienvenu

Parish crawfish processors are hoping to find a more reliable solution to their waste disposal problems following a meeting in Breaux Bridge last week.

Parish processing plants, several of which also generate crab wastes, produce as much as 15,000 tons of waste each year from their peeling operations.

The bulk of this waste is currently going to Acadiana Processors Inc. (API), which operates a plant near Henderson that converts the peelings and offal into a meal that has a variety of uses as animal feed supplement or composting material. The company has also developed a liquid product that shows promise as an attractant for fishing lures.

Greg Benhard, API president, was not available for comment, but explained in a letter to Thomas Hymel, area fisheries agent with the LSU Extension Service, that his plant was designed to handle crawfish wastes on a large volume and crab waste sometimes present a production problem.

The company charges processors a flat $300 per month to dispose of crawfish wastes delivered to the plant, or $800 for service that includes pickup.

Jacque Privat, parish recycling planner, indicated that Waste Management would charge crawfish processors $25 per ton to dispose of their wastes in a WMI landfill.

Benhard said that while present operating conditions are satisfactory, any diversion of waste to other areas could affect the profitability of the plant and cause it to close.

Terry Guidry of Catahoula Crawfish, said he is generally satisfied with his arrangement with API except for the fact that the plant does not accept wastes in the early and late parts of the season when volume is low, and occasionally experiences breakdowns.

Hymel said he and Privat are planning to meet with LSU researchers to study the possibility of broadcasting the crawfish waste onto idle pasture or crop land as a soil supplement.

Hymel suggested that this might be feasible as an alternate disposal method for times when API is shut down. "It might also remove the waste stream from DEQ supervision so it would be considered an agricultural by-product," he added.

A similar method is being used successfully in the Delcambre area with shrimp peelings, although that material is very different in composition from crawfish wastes.

State Rep. Sydnie Mae Durand said she is planning to visit the Delcambre operation to see firsthand how it works.

Although some processors last week raised the possibility of dumping the waste into parish waterways, Hymel stressed that this would be prohibited by DEQ regulations.