Crawfish And Water Management

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The crawfish ponds are now being flooded so that the crawfish harvest can begin by mid November or early December. The first flood is the most crucial time for the crawfish. The water quality and supply in the ponds now will decide if the harvest will be large or small.

The ponds at this time of the year have large amounts of vegetative matter which will act as a food supply for the crawfish. The vegetation is a must for food but can cause problems with water quality. When the vegetation is flooded, decomposition begins and in the process the oxygen in the water is depleted. For this reason the water being added to the pond must have a high level of oxygen.

What are some of the ways to make sure the water in your pond has enough oxygen? The water before entering the pond should be lifted into the air and allowed to fall through a series of screens. By doing this, the water will be broken into small particles. Oxygen will be attached to the small water particles and raise the oxygen level of the water. Oxygen levels in ponds can be checked by personnel in your local Soil Conservation Service office.

Once the oxygen level is high enough at the water source, care must be taken to make sure the water is supplied throughout the pond. The location of the water control structure and/or weirs will help diffuse the water to the entire area in the pond. As example, if your water supply is on the northern end of the pond, the water control structure should be on the southern end. It is advisable to use more than one weir placed in strategic locations to better diffuse the water.

During periods of low oxygen, such as now, the size of pump is very important. The pump must be large enough to flush the pond to remove undesirable water. The pump should be able to furnish 50 gallons per minute per acre being flooded. If this is done you can expect to change the water in the entire pond in seven days.

Many pond operators have experienced that continuous pumping will produce larger catches of crawfish. Continuous pumping versus occasional pumping is a matter of economics that can be determined by one who operates the pond.

It cannot be over emphasized that water quality is probably the most important factor in good production. This goal can be achieved only through good pond design and proper construction. This assistance is available through the local Soil Conservation Service.