Official Says Gators Common

MORGAN CITY, La. (AP) — A state spokesman told the U.S. Fish and Wild Life Service Friday that the alligator has become so common it should be subject to hunting in 35 Louisiana parishes.

Richard Yancey of Baton Rouge, assistant secretary of the Louisiana Department of Wild Life and Fisheries, spoke at a public hearing held by the federal agency at the municipal auditorium.

Yancey also urged that the agency support a move to allow the export of alligator hides and meat.

Jessie Knowles of Baton Rouge, a candidate for lieutenant governor, joined in the appeal for removal of marketing restrictions.

“When the market was open to international trade, France was paying $16 to $18 per foot for hides and the domestic market price was $6,” said Knowles.

The hearing was on a proposal to take the alligator off the endangered species list in nine parishes: Iberia, St. Mary, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Charles, Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard and St. Tammany.

Alligators would be reclassified in those areas as a threatened species — which means there would still be some restrictions on commercial hunting and trapping.

In addition, the hearings dealt with a proposal that the agency simplify federal license requirements and allow the sale of alligator meat.

A similar hearing will be held in Tallahassee, Fla.

Then, in 30 days, the agency will propose new rules spelling out procedures for exporting and reimporting alligator hides.

Three parishes — Cameron, Vermilion and Calcasieu — have had the alligator on the threatened list since 1975.

About 100 persons turned up for the hearing. Everyone who spoke was in favor of delisting the alligator.

“We are going to have an alligator season — hopefully with your blessings,” said Doyle Berry of Berwick.

Berry said alligators had become so numerous they were eating up the nutria and in some cases were a threat to humans. He said there were two reported cases of persons hurt by alligators.