By CHRIS FRINK
Westside bureau

An organizer was arrested briefly Thursday, the third day of a strike by area crawfishermen, and some buyers began to see their crawfish supply decline.

Many crawfishermen who work the Atchafalaya Basin quit fishing earlier this week and demanded at least 30 cents a pound for their catch. The 20 cents to 25 cents they are getting now is too low to survive on, strikers said.

Retailers reported plenty of crawfish reaching the Baton Rouge market and organizers in Breaux Bridge said the strike should not affect the crawfish festival there this weekend.

The Breaux Bridge festival begins at 4:30 p.m. today.

"I got all I need for tomorrow, but who knows about Saturday," said Pete Pitre of Pitre's Seafood in Baton Rouge. Pitre also said the wholesaler he buys from raised the price he pays fishermen to 30 cents.

"So far no problem," said Bill Pizzolato of Tony's Seafood. "I don't anticipate any shortage tomorrow." Pizzolato said his buyers reported plenty of crawfish in the Morgan City area, but shortages in Baton Rouge.

"It's dead as a mackerel," said Henry Berthelot, a small wholesaler based in Bayou Pigeon. "I'm just answering the phone and telling people that I ain't got anything."

"I'm off about 100-150 sacks today," said wholesaler Wilbert Hebert of Belle River, who said he usually buys 400-500 sacks of crawfish daily. "I can get by, but my peeling plant's not going to be open on Friday."

"It looks like more (crawfishermen) went out (Thursday) and more will go out (today)," he said.

"Some buyers feeling pinch from crawfishermen's strike"
Striking crawfishermen gather around Mark Domangue at Belle River after Domangue, center, and his wife, Noba, right, returned from crawfishing Thursday. The strikers were attempting to discourage the Domangues from selling their catch to buyers.

Strike

CONTINUED FROM 1B

"More fishermen are going out (today)," said Pierre Part wholesaler Henry Blanchard. "They're not making any money sitting at home." Strike organizer Kerry Rodriguez said strike participation continued to grow.

"Some buyers went up on their price, but we have to stay out until they all go up to 30," he said. "We decided we're going to take this as far as it'll go," Rodriguez said.

"Only three fishermen put out at Bayou Pigeon," Rodriguez said. Only a few went out from Belle River. "We can't stop 100 percent," he said.

Iberville Parish Sheriff's deputies booked Rodriguez early Thursday morning on one count of resisting an officer, said Chief Criminal Deputy Brent Allain.

Rodriguez allegedly ignored repeated requests to move his truck from a "no parking" area at the Bayou Pigeon boat ramp, Allain said.

"I have as much right to park there as everybody else," he said. Rodriguez was released after he posted a $1,000 bond, he said.

Rodriguez said the deputy tried to keep him from parking his truck in a valid area and then cursed him repeatedly.

"I know this as peaceful as we can," Rodriguez said. "You've got to keep a level head and earn these people's respect." Rodriguez was released after he posted a $1,000 bond, he said.

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