



## NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION - STATEWIDE IMPACTS

Week Ending 3/20/09

- ◆ The newly formed American Prawn Cooperative (APC) must pursue new and innovative markets to sell their product. **In an effort to assist this effort, NC Cooperative Extension provided leadership and technical assistance writing a grant proposal for the APC to the NC Rural Center. With additional assistance from USDA, County Government, and NCSU Cooperative Extension and other departments, the \$300,000 grant was funded.** This project will support the development of an innovative prawn processing and storage facility expected to save producers an estimated 20% of their annual operating costs due to expanded marketing and sales efficiency (about \$41,000). More significantly, the flexibility to provide product in multiple forms will allow APC members to penetrate markets, otherwise unavailable. To date, annual savings of labor and marketing inputs have exceeded an additional \$10,000.
- ◆ In today's busy world, families and the communities where we live face many challenges. Working together to strengthen families and communities is the goal of Extension and Community Association (ECA) clubs in Surry County. Providing opportunities for leadership development, educational support and research-based information from NC State University and NC A&T State University, ECA empowers members to make a positive impact. **During 2008, Surry County ECA members volunteered 8,525 hours to Extension and an additional 9,919 in the community to make our county a better place. At the current value of \$19.51 per hour placed on volunteer time, the 18,444 hours served in Surry County is a gift of \$ 359,842.44 to our community. ECA members do make a difference.**
- ◆ The aquaculture of hybrid striped bass is one of the more costly domestic aquaculture enterprises, especially in terms of labor and losses due to mishandling. During the past 5 years and with input from NC Cooperative Extension, researchers at Mississippi State University have been developing a novel strategy to past production practices that can improve efficiency up to 25% over standard methods. Based simply on the stocking of advanced size-graded fingerlings, resultant decreased time to harvest as well as lower production inputs like labor, following this new approach can provide a huge benefit to producers. **NC Cooperation Extension has recently co-authored a USDA aquaculture fact sheet with its Mississippi State research colleagues. Published last September, *Hybrid Striped Bass: Pond Production of Food Fish (SRAC #303)* provides an innovative protocol that can save NC producers approximately \$1,000,000 annually.**
- ◆ Historically, the NC prawn industry has received juvenile prawn from domestic or out of state sources late in the production season. NC Cooperative Extension was asked to develop a production protocol to enhance the speed and efficiency of nursery production, so juveniles could be stocked earlier than before. With assistance from Mississippi State University and Kentucky State University, NC Cooperative Extension technical assistance supported advanced stocking by nearly 4 weeks over previous years. **This expanded production season resulted in prawn reaching the largest average size in the 7 year history of NC prawn aquaculture with nearly 7-8 prawn per pound! These prawn are larger than any prawn produced nationally and have a superior value of nearly \$9 per pound for a whole product; wholesale cost will command approximately \$35,000 more for the state's prawn producers, now estimated at nearly \$200,000, and position our product for expanded regional and international markets.**

- ◆ The drought conditions of 2007 carried over to 2008 in various ways. For livestock producers of Wayne County, one of these ways included drought stricken hay that had been produced during the 2007 season. The dangers of high nitrate hay, of which drought stress can trigger, were advised to producers by NC Cooperative Extension through livestock newsletters and news articles. As a result, many producers took Extension's advice to have hay tested prior to feeding or selling the forage, and made adjustments on feeding or selling the hay if problem samples were identified. Because of having this hay tested for nitrate content, producer's protected approximately 2,500 head of beef cattle from high nitrate hay; 213 forage samples from Wayne County were analyzed for high nitrates in 2008. **This saved many beef herds from fetal abortions and random, sudden death of animals, protecting an estimated \$1.5 million worth of beef cattle.**
- ◆ There was a 4-H member in Cleveland County that knew at the age of 13 he wanted to attend the US Naval Academy (USNA). This was a more difficult task for him because he was homeschooled and not exposed to the extracurricular activities as those offered in public school. He joined a swim team, volunteer fire department and became more involved in 4-H to please the recruiter. Through persistence, hard work and determination, the young man received an appointment. He later told our 4-H Agent that he credits 4-H with giving him the confidence and leadership skills needed to accomplish this goal. **An education from the USNA is valued at over \$400,000 and graduates are highly sought after by large companies for employment.**
- ◆ In the fall of 2008, Medicare announced some major changes in the way the beneficiaries were to be notified of their 2009 Part D coverage. These changes created a buzz in the community that had both Medicare and Medicaid recipients worried. Billing was an issue and Social Services and Social Security Personnel were unable to handle the confusion. By providing one-on-one educational sessions with families and explaining the revisions, NC Cooperative Extension and their core of trained volunteers were able to communicate the changes, make the necessary computer corrections, enroll new applicants, and provide an improved line of communication between the local pharmacist and their frustrated Medicare customers. Even new retirees were excited to learn that NC Cooperative Extension can teach them everything they needed to know about Medicare in one hour or less. **In Perquimans County, Cooperative Extension helped 80 individuals collectively save \$124,000 in prescription costs.**
- ◆ Cabarrus County Commissioners have the vision of a more sustainable community. They want food produced locally to be available to local citizens. Cattle have been the county's largest income producer for quite a few years. The closest slaughter plant is an hour and a half away. **NC Cooperative Extension assisted the county in the successful application for a NCDA Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation grant in the amount of \$622,000, to add a livestock slaughter plant to an existing meat processing plant.** The process of obtaining water, waste water and construction permits is underway. When the plant becomes operational, local farmers can market direct to consumers, institutional buyers and restaurants fresh, natural, forage or grain fed beef, pork, lamb and goat. Cooperative Extension conducted several educational meetings to help interested farmers determine if direct marketing meat should be a part of their production enterprise.
- ◆ The State's freshwater prawn aquaculture industry has grown 1200% since its beginning in 2001. By 2006, producers found themselves competing against each other as they expanded into overlapping markets. Concerned, producers approached NC Cooperative Extension for assistance. Cooperative Extension provided leadership to instill a sense that by working together, producers could find greater success than continuing to work independently. Producers were assisted to form relationships to assist each other and benefited accordingly, including the formation of a cooperative, the American Prawn Cooperative. **Created with leadership from NC Cooperative Extension, and with assistance from USDA, NCDA and NCSU business and cooperative specialists, this action has eliminated market competition among producers and provided a savings in marketing expenses- estimated to be over \$45,000 in 2008.** As new members join the cooperative, savings to producers will increase proportionally as expenses are reduced; an outcome significant to the future expansion of this industry in NC.

- ◆ Pre-teens that struggle with self-identity, self-discipline, and establishing healthy peer relations need role models who can not only demonstrate appropriate behavior, but who can also teach related skills and reinforce why they are important. NC Cooperative Extension's *4-H SPACES Life Skills Program* in Wake County provides opportunities for youth to learn and practice social skills. Damien, a young man referred by the school counselor because of his negative feelings toward others and problems with authority figures, participated in weekly group sessions. Instructors engaged him in experiential learning activities that encouraged him to learn more about himself and how he interacts with others and the world around him. He discovered what he could do to be more successful. **After being involved in several program sessions, Damien started using what he learned in the program during his regular school day. He improved his attitude toward education and decreased his school suspensions.**
- ◆ NC ranks 16th in the U.S. in highest rate of overweight and obese adults (*F as in Fat Report, 2008*). As per NC Prevention Partners ([www.ncpreventionpartners.org](http://www.ncpreventionpartners.org)), the physical inactivity and poor nutrition costs nearly \$11.1 billion each year to NC employers. NC Cooperative Extension in Gaston County partnered with the Health Department to provide *Weigh Less*, a worksite wellness program to county government employees. **As per NC Prevention Partners guidelines, *Weigh Less* provided an estimated cost savings of \$70,119. Twenty-one employees completed this 12-week program, lost 104 pounds, and report as a result they are getting at least 30 minutes of physical activity a day (71%), eating fewer calories (86%), are now more mindful of how much they eat (91%), and are more mindful of getting enough daily physical activity (81%). *Weigh Less* will be offered again this year to other county employees.**
- ◆ Volunteers that know how to relate to the public, understand insurance jargon, show empathy toward others, and use discretion when discussing medical and financial issues are appreciated resources within our community. **Four Extension Volunteers connected with 217 Medicare beneficiaries and saved them approximately \$17,400 in prescription drug costs in 2008.** Using telephone, face-to-face, and workshop settings, these volunteers established a trusting relationship within the community and donated 240 hours of service. Agencies such as the Area Agency on Aging and the Senior Center are community sites that offer volunteer services and share in the responsibility of reaching the audiences with the insurance information. Each quarter, specialist from the NC Department of Insurance extend trainings to our area and assure that volunteers are equipped to handle general as well as specific questions and concerns. Personalized comparisons are available and help families make educated insurance decisions.
- ◆ More and more urban residents, public schools and community groups want to have the opportunity to grow their own food, utilize open spaces and lots, and to add beauty to their homes, schools and neighborhoods. **Seven new community gardens were established at locations such as Ministry of Truth Church, ARCA and EL Buen Pastor Church; 138 youth and 25 adults were involved in implementing gardens in these areas. In addition to providing produce to 225 needy families, other benefits were giving ARCA participants an outlet as they overcome drug addiction. El Buen Pastor Church benefitted from giving Hispanic youth an opportunity to participate in an educational outdoor program, learn about agriculture, and community participation.**
- ◆ Homework completion is a problem for many children in Ashe County schools. Many times, this is due to the inability of parents to assist their children with their homework, either from lack of ability or lack of concern. Ashe County 4-H Afterschool implemented a plan in conjunction with the schools to offer a homework track in the 4-H Afterschool Programs. **Of the 396 students enrolled, teachers report that 75.76% improved in homework completion, which also resulted in improvement in class participation.**

- ◆ State permits for animal waste operators of swine farms require many management practices. With Wayne County ranked fourth in hog production, NC Cooperative Extension routinely provided education and technical support to producers with regard to nutrient management, through group training and individual technical support. One example is through annual calibration of nutrient irrigation equipment. Cooperative Extension provides both equipment and technical assistance with regard to its operation. One Wayne County producer was questioned regarding his calibration results by the Division of Water Quality in 2008. The concern was with regard to over-application of nutrients to a field, which would lead to non-point source pollution. The farmer requested Cooperative Extension's assistance to prove he did not over-apply. After review of the calibration results and calculations, it was determined that the producer did not over apply. **Through Extension's help, a \$3,000 fine was prevented by proving that the farmer was not in violation.**