

I am a commercial fisherman; my profession goes back to biblical times, many centuries ago. The fisherman is still a way of life today. Not as much so as back then, for many reasons. Today commercial fishing has to be in your blood, to withstand all the many obstacles you face. The problems fishermen face today are manmade. Mother Nature takes care of the fisheries, but man does not take care of Mother Nature. Through my years at working in many Texas bays systems, I have learned the importance of freshwater in flows to these bays. Through the years the old timers used to say that taking the water away from rivers upstream is changing the way shrimp reproduce and migrate and they thought that this was the reason there wasn't as many shrimp or oysters or fish as there used to be. I didn't quite understand what they meant at the time. I thought the volume of shrimp we had 30 years ago was good, but compared to what they had, it wasn't. And now, compared to 30 years ago today, it still isn't. What those old timers were actually saying is the water wasn't making it's way down to the bays and estuaries like it used to and they thought that it affected the way the bays produced seafood. Well they were right, thru much biological work and studies from several agencies, it has been proven that without the freshwater inflow, the change in salinity of the bays saltwater affects the way shrimp, fish, oysters, and crabs survive and reproduce. For instance, shrimp, and oysters need so much fresh water to grow. Just like a farmer, not enough water and some crops don't produce well and some not at all. Shrimp and oysters are the same, without just the right amount of fresh water; you will have a bad season or in some cases hardly a season at all. We are taking away constantly from the rivers that feed the bays. Today the freshwater that makes its way to the bays is a very small fraction of what made it

down 50 – 60 years ago. In my county, Matagorda Co., we have East and West Matagorda Bays and many small lakes and estuaries that are fed by the Colorado River directly and indirectly. The seafood business in Matagorda Co. produces many jobs, as Palacios has one of the largest shrimping fleets on the Gulf Coast. We depend on Mother Nature to do her job, but it's hard when man is constantly changing the environment to suit his needs. Sometimes we don't really know when we are making a mistake until further down the road, many years later. A good example is industry, building plants along the rivers that need to use a lot of water that never comes back to the river and you don't know till many years later you've caused long lasting effects to the eco systems of those down stream waters. Like a new drug that is tested and O.K'd by the FDA but years later you see lawsuits proving that the drugs side effects made people severely ill. Sometimes we just don't know at the time what we are doing, and I think by not making sure fresh water makes its way to the bays and estuaries clean and in volume, that we will continue to see in years to come a lesser impact of jobs by the fisheries and in turn, less seafood to eat and less fish to catch. Recreational and commercial fisheries industry depends on fresh water inflow to sustain jobs now and in the future. The bay systems, rivers, and estuaries depend on us to make sure that enough water makes it down to give those eco systems a chance to survive and prosper like they need to. The bottom line is there is no spare water for the bays to give up. One day, maybe not in our lifetime, we will cripple the bay system enough that both fisheries will hardly exist. We have to make it a priority of our state and Co. leaders to make sure fresh water gets to our bays and estuaries. Even though as every stakeholder in this process believes in his or her heart that who they are representing

needs their water, everyone should remember that if we take away from the natural environment, inland or coastal, we all will eventually suffer the consequences as mother nature cannot overcome what we take away and the eco system will deteriorate. I'm only an uneducated commercial fisherman, but it has not been hard for me to see we are slowly but surely killing off the natural resources that we are all supposed to protect. So let's try and do the right thing and make sure the bays, estuaries, wetlands, and marshlands get the fresh water inflow that they need to survive now and in the future. And as for BBEST & BBASC, not knowing exactly what that amount of inflow is is not a reason to not come up with an amount of fresh water inflow that these systems need. In other words, let's not short change the bay systems because there is not enough scientific data to support the amount of fresh water it needs. TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE has many studies to explain the importance of fresh water inflow.