Abstract

USEPA and NOAA directed the states to develop a Coastal Nonpoint Source Pollution Program, which would include best management practices for marinas. One of the best management practices that was suppose to be implemented at all coastal marinas was a fish waste disposal system so that the waste would not be deposited in coastal waters. Decomposition of these wastes utilizes dissolved oxygen, which may cause water quality problems. Often sports and commercial fishermen clean their catch on dockside and the waste may be collected and discarded directly into the water body at the end of the day. In order to discourage fish marina operators and fish processors from discarding fish cleaning/processing residuals directly into the water bodies, a method by which fish processing waste could be disposed of was needed. In the absence of other economical and viable technologies, composting emerged as a practical solution to the waste disposal problem. Low-technology composting methods have been evaluated as a means for fish processing disposal at marina sites.

In 1997, LSU worked with LDEQ on implementing a fish composting demonstration project in the Lafitte-Barataria area, on Bayou Barataria. This area was selected due to its thriving commercial and recreational fisheries. Lafitte and Barataria are old commercial and recreational fishing communities located within the marshes of south Louisiana. A three-bin composter was installed at the marina in December 1997 and fish residuals and bulking material (hardwood bark and rice hulls) were added on a routine basis. Fish residuals were added to the composting system 7 times during the testing period. Fresh bark and rice hulls were added 5 times during the same testing period. The results of the project indicated that the composting systems were very effective with full decomposition occurring within 75 days. An educational-outreach session was held to illustrate the results of the project to other marina operations within the basin.