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Crawfish in the coal mine: Climate disruption is here

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A typical crawfish boil scene. Photo: Logan Ellzey

Last weekend, my partner and I ate at a local restaurant in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Crawfish season had clearly begun. People were crowded at the bar with trays piled with these “mud bugs.”

It’s a typical Louisiana scene. Crawfish boils are part of the culture here, a time-honored ritual. From the rural parishes to New Orleans, people gather in backyards to cook and dine on crawfish – like at a barbecue. It’s part of the Cajun, Creole, and even Vietnamese cuisine here.

But this year, scenes like the one at that Baton Rouge restaurant will no doubt be less common and more expensive. [LSU AgCenter experts](#) have been making the rounds explaining the ongoing shortage.

The combination of winter cold fronts and summer heat and drought took a toll on crawfish, which are mostly grown in water-logged rice fields. [2023 was the hottest year on record](#). Those same heat and drought conditions caused multiple crises in the state, including the [saltwater intrusion](#) and an [epidemic of wildfires](#).

An [LSU AgCenter report](#) released in November 2023 said that the drought and heatwave cost the state's agricultural sector \$1.67 billion. If the Louisiana agricultural sector as a whole is valued at \$11.7 billion, that would mean that the 2023 losses are equal to 14.27% of the sector's value.

The AgCenter projects that 2024's crawfish industry losses will be about \$140 million, that is, equalling 60% of the industry's \$230 million value. This will be the worst crawfish season on record.

Losses like that should be frightening to the capitalist class. But this comes at a time when the capitalists and their politicians are doubling down on protecting fossil fuel industry profits at the expense of life on earth. That was the thrust of the debacle that took place at the [2023 COP 28 conference in Dubai](#).

That isn't stopping U.S. Representative Clay Higgins (R-Louisiana) from [trying to get federal relief money for the industry](#). He wants a crawfish bailout.

Meanwhile, Louisiana's knock-off Trump governor, Jeff Landry, just appointed Tyler Gray as secretary of the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources. Gray is not even a former but rather the CURRENT corporate secretary of the Placid Refining Company. Seems like a conflict of interest.

But what can we expect? Racist Landry is an oil-and-gas investment millionaire who

doesn't care whether we live or die.

What's clear is that the capitalists are going to try to squeeze out every last bit of value (even if it means killing the planet) while unloading the burden onto working-class and oppressed people, whether that means higher crawfish and other food prices, flooded homes, or layoffs as agriculture and other industries are disrupted by climate shocks.

I say enough. Let's give these scoundrels a run for their money. We're coming for you Jeff, Trump, Biden, and all the rest. Time to hit the streets.

