

Charles H. Bronson, Commissioner

## **Bronson Announces That BP Will Pay \$20 Million To Fund Seafood Inspections, Marketing Efforts In Wake Of Oil Spill**

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TALLAHASSEE – Florida Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Charles H. Bronson announced today that BP will pay \$20 million to his department over the next three years to help fund enhanced seafood inspections and marketing efforts aimed at restoring public confidence in the safety of Gulf of Mexico seafood.

Today's agreement comes just over three months after the Commissioner sent a letter to BP President Bob Dudley outlining the added costs his department will incur in years to come to assure the safety of Gulf seafood and initiate marketing efforts in response to the Deepwater Horizon incident last spring.

The letter was accompanied by a comprehensive food safety plan that detailed equipment that would be needed and tests that would have to be conducted to ensure that no lingering oil residues or chemical dispersants are present on the dozens of species of Gulf seafood harvested in Florida, including shrimp, crabs, oysters and dozens of species of finfish.

“We are grateful to BP for its responsiveness to our request and feel confident that these funds will go a long way toward assuring the safety of seafood harvested in Florida waters and in restoring consumer confidence in our seafood products,” Bronson said.

Although the agreement that Bronson reached with BP provides that the company will provide \$10 million for seafood testing and \$10 million for marketing over the next three years, a clause in the memorandum of understanding that constitutes the agreement provides up to a three-year extension should state or federal waters contiguous to Florida have to be closed to seafood harvesting in the future as a result of lingering contaminants from the oil spill.

In his initial letter to BP, Bronson requested \$59 million to address efforts during the next 10 years, but the letter was sent in July the same week that the well was capped but not permanently sealed. There were concerns at that time that more oil would reach Florida waters.

With a clause in the agreement assuring that funding could be extended if warranted, Bronson said he is confident that the agreement will fully protect Florida.

“We believe this agreement is good for our citizens, good for both our commercial and recreational fishing industry and positive news for everyone who enjoys our seafood,” Bronson said.

Florida has an estimated 5,300 commercial fishermen who harvest about 84 million pounds of high-value seafood and fishery products each year with a dock value of approximately \$170 million. Another 1,400 Florida-based businesses buy, sell or process seafood.

Moreover, many, if not most, Florida restaurants feature seafood for residents and visitors alike in the state’s \$27 billion restaurant industry.

And the state enjoys a \$4.4 billion recreational fishing industry which brings millions of tourists to Florida, which is generally regarded as the recreational fishing capital of the nation.