

FLORIDA COMMERCIAL FISHING SEASON ADVISORY

All fisheries are open and safe

August 10, 2010

NOAA Reopens More than 5,000 Square Miles of Closed Gulf Fishing Area
No oil has been observed for 30 days in area to be re-opened for fishing

Today NOAA reopened 5,144 square miles of Gulf waters to commercial and recreational finfish fishing. The reopening was announced after consultation with FDA and under a re-opening protocol agreed to by NOAA, the FDA, and the Gulf states.

Since July 3, NOAA data have shown no oil in the area, and United States Coast Guard observers flying over the area in the last 30 days have also not observed any oil. Trajectory models show the area is at a low risk for future exposure to oil and, most importantly, fish caught in the area and tested by NOAA experts have shown no signs of contamination.

"Consumer safety is NOAA's primary concern, which is why we developed rigorous safety standards in conjunction with the FDA and the Gulf states to ensure that seafood is safe in the reopened area," said Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "We are confident that Gulf fish from this area is safe to eat and pleased that recreational and commercial fisherman can fish these waters again."

At its closest point, the area to be reopened is about 115 miles northeast of the Deepwater/BP wellhead.

From June 27 through July 20, NOAA sampled 153 finfish, including grouper, snapper, tuna and mahi mahi, from the area. Sensory and chemical testing of these finfish followed the methodology and procedures in the re-opening protocol, with sensory analysis finding no detectable oil or dispersant odors or flavors, and results of chemical analysis well below the levels of concern.

NOAA will continue to take samples for testing from the newly re-opened area, and the agency has also implemented dockside sampling to test fish caught throughout the Gulf by commercial fishermen.

Fishing closures remain the first line of defense to prevent contaminated seafood from entering the marketplace. NOAA continues to work closely with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Gulf states to ensure seafood safety. NOAA and FDA are working together on broad-scale seafood sampling that includes sampling seafood from inside and outside the closure area, as well as dockside and market-based sampling.

The closed area now covers 52,395 miles, or 22 percent of the federal waters in the Gulf, down from 37 percent at its height. On July 22, NOAA reopened 26,388 square miles of Gulf waters off of the Florida Peninsula.

Link to map:

http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/deepwater_horizon/DWH_BP_OilSpill_FisheryClosureMap_081010_Opening.pdf

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