

## **SHELBY REQUESTS FISHERIES DISASTER DECLARATION IN GULF OF MEXICO**

U.S. Senator Richard Shelby (R-Ala.), ranking Republican on the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee, today wrote a letter to Commerce Department Secretary Gary Locke to request a fisheries disaster declaration in the Gulf of Mexico following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. Under current law, the Department of Commerce has the discretion to designate a commercial fishery failure as a result of man-made causes beyond the control of fishery managers.

**“It is indisputable that the crisis we now face is man-made,” Shelby wrote. “If the oil continues to spill in the Gulf unabated, it will not only destroy the fisheries this year, but will adversely impact the Gulf’s ecosystem for decades. Alabama’s fishing industry represents one of the largest economic engines in the state – accounting for more than \$800 million in sales and nearly 18,000 jobs. We must proactively work to adequately deal with this situation.”**

The full text of the letter is below.

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May 18, 2010

The Honorable Gary Locke  
Secretary  
US Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Locke,

I am writing to request a fisheries disaster declaration in the Gulf of Mexico. Under Section 312(a)(1)(B) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the Department of Commerce is given the discretion to designate a commercial fishery failure as a result of man-made causes beyond the control of fishery managers.

As oil continues pouring into the Gulf at a rate of over 5,000 barrels a day, it is critical we take into account the severe impact this event is having on fisheries-related industries. In 2008, the most recent data NOAA has on fish stock assessments, commercial fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico harvested 1.27 billion pounds of finfish and shellfish that earned \$659 million in total landings revenue. In addition, recreational fishermen took 24 million fishing trips in 2008. Due to the threat of oil, federal waters have been closed, resulting in reduced ability to fish the waters and numerous fishing trip cancellations. The economic impact on the fishing industry could be severe and extensive.

It is indisputable that the crisis we now face is man-made. If the oil continues to spill in the Gulf unabated, it will not only destroy the fisheries this year, but will adversely impact the Gulf's ecosystem for decades. Alabama's fishing industry represents one of the largest economic engines in the state – accounting for more than \$800 million in sales and nearly 18,000 jobs. We must proactively work to adequately deal with this situation.

A federal fisheries disaster declaration will provide immediate federal assistance to this area and mitigate devastating impacts to the Gulf's fisheries. I look forward to working with you as we continue cleanup and recovery efforts along the Gulf Coast.

Sincerely,

Richard Shelby