



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES



News Release

Contacts: Robbie Wilbur, MDEQ, 601-421-5699
Lauren Thompson, DMR, 228-219-5226

July 30, 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DMR and DEQ Reopen Waters North of the Barrier Islands to Commercial and Recreational Finfish and Shrimp Fishing

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), in coordination with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), have ordered the **reopening of Mississippi territorial waters north of the barrier islands to all commercial and recreational finfish and shrimp fishing activities** that were part of the precautionary oil spill closures. This order takes effect at 6:01 p.m. today. **All commercial and recreational crab and oyster fishing will remain closed in the affected area.**

The reopening is being implemented after the completion of extensive sampling and testing conducted by the DMR, DEQ, NOAA and FDA. The FDA has advised that, following extensive sensory testing and chemical analysis, tissue samples tested indicate that seafood from these previously closed areas north of the barrier islands remain safe for consumption.

Due to a more complex testing process for crab and oyster, these fisheries will remain prohibited in the closed areas. Crab and oyster tissue samples are currently being tested, and as soon as data indicates they are safe for consumption, additional areas will be opened for these fisheries.

All waters north of the barrier islands that are normally open to shrimping will be open. However, DMR reminds shrimp fishermen who use skimmer trawls that a 30-minute tow time is in effect, unless they have a properly installed turtle excluder device.

All other regulations specific to each particular fishery will remain in full force and effect. Anglers are asked to avoid disturbing booms and oil spill-related activities.

The reopening affects the following Mississippi territorial waters: all waters north of a line beginning at a point on the Louisiana-Mississippi border at the Intracoastal Waterway Grand Island Channel LIGHT 1; thence northeasterly, along the Grand Island Channel to Buoy 15; thence easterly to Buoy 1 at the intersection of the Grand Isle Channel and the Pass Marianne Channel to LIGHT 18, thence to Buoy 12, thence to Buoy 10; thence southeasterly, along the most direct line, to the westernmost point of Cat Island; thence running northeasterly, following the northern shore to the northeastern-most point of Cat Island; thence southeasterly, along the most direct line, to the westernmost point of West Ship Island; thence easterly, following the northern shore, to the easternmost point of West Ship Island; thence easterly along the most direct line, to the westernmost point of East Ship Island; thence easterly following the northern shore to the easternmost point of East Ship Island; thence easterly, along the most direct line, to the westernmost point of Horn Island; thence easterly, following the northern shore, to the easternmost point of Horn Island; thence easterly, along the most direct line, to the westernmost point of Petit Bois Island; thence easterly, following the northern shore, to the easternmost point of Petit Bois Island; thence due east to a point on the Mississippi-Alabama border.

—MORE—

Waters south of the barrier islands remain closed. Samples from that area have been collected and delivered to NOAA and FDA for analysis, and results are expected within seven to 10 days. Those waters will be reopened when sample results show that the fishery resources in that area are safe for consumption.

More information and links about DEQ's and DMR's roles in oil spill response are available at www.deq.state.ms.us/oilspill and www.dmr.state.ms.us/DMR/oil-spill.htm. Water sampling information available at: <http://opcgis.deq.state.ms.us/oilspillmap> and air monitoring data at: <http://gulfcoast.airnowtech.org>.

Join MDEQ on Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/MDEQ/118172664880239?v=wall>. Follow MDEQ on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/MDEQ>.

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality safeguards the health, safety, and welfare of Mississippians by conserving and improving our environment and wise economic growth through focused research and responsible regulation.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, and conserving marine interests of the state by managing all marine life, public wetlands, adjacent uplands and waterfront areas to provide for the optimal commercial, recreational, educational and economic uses of these resources consistent with environmental concerns and social changes. Visit the DMR online at www.dmr.ms.gov.

MAP

—END—