

# The Seafood Industry

The seafood industry continues to play an important role in the diversity of Biloxi's local economy. Worldwide demand for fresh and processed seafood, especially shrimp, continues to grow, justifying local processors' investments in technological advances that keep them competitive with Louisiana, Texas and other Gulf region seafood-related businesses.

Some good news for shrimpers – that the International Trade Commission voted in March 2011 to continue existing antidumping duty orders on frozen warm water shrimp from Brazil, China, India, Thailand, and Vietnam – came on the heels of the April 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. This event had a devastating impact on those whose livelihoods are tied to the Gulf, especially commercial seafood harvesters and charter boat business owners. Portions of state and federal waters were closed from May 2010 until April 2011. At the peak of contamination, 37% of federal Gulf waters and all Mississippi Gulf waters were closed.

During the 2010-2011 oyster season, which runs mid-October through mid-April, the Mississippi Commission of Marine Resources allowed only tonging, not dredging, of oysters in an effort to conserve oyster resources in the gradual process of being restored after Hurricane Katrina. This restriction on harvesting resulted in only 43,702 sacks being landed; before Hurricane Katrina, the Mississippi oyster industry landed approximately 300,000 sacks a year.

Then, during a 42-day period in May-June 2011, an estimated 5.6 trillion gallons of fresh water from the Mississippi River flood were discharged through Louisiana's Bonnet Carre Spillway into the Gulf, resulting in the mortality of an estimated 95% of the re-established oyster reefs in the Mississippi Sound. It is unlikely that there will be a local 2011-2012 oyster harvest.

## Local Support for the Seafood Industry

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) provides resources to support marketing of Mississippi's commercial fisheries products. Its publications may be accessed through DMR's website: [www.dmr.ms.state.us](http://www.dmr.ms.state.us).

Numerous federal and academic agencies in the Biloxi area are engaged in marine, coastal, estuarine and atmospheric research, which supports the local seafood industry through species conservation/restoration, water quality enhancement, invasive species monitoring, and related programs. Federal researchers include the Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanography and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Navy.

Local marine-oriented research centers include the Mississippi State University Coastal Research and Extension Center, the University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Coast Research Lab, the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium and local offices of the Gulf of Mexico Program, the Mississippi Laboratory Southeast Fisheries Science Center, the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, the Northern Gulf Institute, and the Institute for Marine Mammal Studies.



About 85 percent of Mississippi's harvest is **brown shrimp**, which are most abundant from June to October. They congregate in water between 15-120 feet deep and are caught mostly at night.

Found in shallow water, usually no deeper than 90 feet, **white shrimp** are caught mostly during daylight hours. October to January are the best months to fish for white shrimp.

**Pink shrimp** are usually found in waters 36-108 feet deep and generally are caught at night. They are most abundant between October and April.

Source: Mississippi Department of Marine Resources



- At the turn of the nineteenth century, Biloxi was known as The Seafood Capital of the World - its seafood factories were world leaders in oyster canning production.
- In 2009, the dockside value of commercial fisheries in the Gulf was \$629 million.
- Warm water oysters from the Gulf of Mexico can reach 4 inches in less than 9 months, with most of the 3" marketable oysters taking about 18-24 months. A female oyster can produce 100 million eggs during one breeding season.
- According to NOAA Fisheries Service, the cost of fuel accounts for more than 48% of costs to operate a shrimping vessel.





## Biloxi's Commercial Docking Facilities

The Commercial Docking Facility, south of Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, provides 51 berthing spaces for the local commercial seafood fleet, with berth sizes ranging from 35 – 60 feet. Located off of Bayview Avenue on Biloxi's Back Bay, the **Lighthouse Fishing Docks** provide 35 slips for the local commercial fleet, with berths ranging in size from 45 – 100 feet.

Smaller commercial boats engaging in charters, tours and other water-based businesses also have two facilities at which to dock. The **Biloxi Small Craft Harbor** is located on Highway 90, east of the Commercial Docking Facility and the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino. Having recently benefited from more than \$7 million in repairs, the harbor offers 141 boat slips, ranging from 25 – 60 feet, an on-site boat ramp, a harbor master's building, and public restrooms with showers. Design of a fuel dock and bait shop is underway, with an estimated construction cost of about \$1.1 million. An estimated 20 commercial fishing and charter boats dock in the Small Craft Harbor, as does the Biloxi Shrimping Tour boat. 16 slips are reserved for transients.

The **Point Cadet Marina**, located south of Highway 90 and the Isle Casino Hotel, has been renovated at a cost of about \$7.3 million. There are 300 slips at Point Cadet Marina, 20 of which are reserved for transients. In addition to the research vessels of the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, 24 charter boats dock here. Expansion of the marina is being considered as part of a comprehensive plan to enhance public access to the Biloxi waterfront.

"Last year's oil spill was just the latest obstacle for the shrimp industry," said John Williams, Executive Director of the Southern Shrimp Alliance.

"We've dealt with hurricanes, escalating fuel costs - a lot of things that are out of our control. But battling unfair trade practices is something we can do to try to make a difference for shrimp fishermen. Our industry still has a lot of work to do to ensure that it can remain competitive, but at least this should give us the opportunity we deserve to compete on a level playing field."

### Mississippi Annual Landings of Brown Shrimp

| Year  | Pounds     | \$            |
|-------|------------|---------------|
| 2004  | 13,052,681 | \$ 15,162,832 |
| 2005  | 5,213,743  | \$ 7,770,095  |
| 2006  | 5,071,731  | \$ 6,111,031  |
| 2007  | 8,009,397  | \$ 11,318,896 |
| 2008  | 5,382,305  | \$ 9,213,467  |
| 2009  | 6,347,459  | \$ 6,847,481  |
| Total | 43,077,316 | \$ 56,423,802 |

Source: National Marine Fisheries Service

### Mississippi Annual Landings of Oysters

| Year  | Pounds    | \$            |
|-------|-----------|---------------|
| 2004  | 3,029,391 | \$ 6,073,242  |
| 2005  | 610,384   | \$ 1,447,132  |
| 2006* | 0         | \$ 0          |
| 2007  | 299,088   | \$ 818,544    |
| 2008  | 2,610,349 | \$ 6,869,160  |
| 2009  | 2,191,724 | \$ 6,100,264  |
| Total | 8,740,936 | \$ 21,308,342 |

\*About 95% oyster mortality occurred on the major commercial reefs during Hurricane Katrina and 35% of Mississippi's oyster fleet was lost, according to the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources.  
Source: National Marine Fisheries Service

### Mississippi Annual Landings of All Seafood Species Combined

| Year  | Pounds        | \$             |
|-------|---------------|----------------|
| 2004  | 183,558,261   | \$ 43,618,143  |
| 2005  | 167,609,834   | \$ 23,385,725  |
| 2006  | 221,720,414   | \$ 21,586,062  |
| 2007  | 227,834,261   | \$ 39,340,404  |
| 2008  | 201,822,002   | \$ 43,696,487  |
| 2009  | 230,284,417   | \$ 37,998,473  |
| Total | 1,232,829,189 | \$ 209,625,294 |

Source: National Marine Fisheries Service

