



# NEWS FROM NOAA

## NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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### **COMMERCE SECRETARY ANNOUNCES GULF SEAFOOD SAFE TO EAT AS ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF HURRICANE KATRINA APPROACHES**

U.S. Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez declared today that gulf seafood continues to show no signs of elevated contaminants as the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina approaches. Secretary Gutierrez made the announcement at Galatoire's Restaurant in the French Quarter of New Orleans as he challenged investors from all over the country and the world to come and invest in the region, stressing that New Orleans and the Gulf Coast are open for business.

The Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has concluded its series of post-Katrina testing of Gulf seafood, water and sediment. The fourth and final monitoring report, issued this week, shows that samples of white shrimp collected between September 2005 and April 2006 contain no elevated levels of chemical contaminants. Shrimp samples collected in late fall showed a slight spike in hydrocarbons due to exposure to oil in the water, but that spike was well below FDA's concern level for human consumption and has since subsided.

"NOAA's latest survey of possible seafood contamination in the Gulf of Mexico once again shows that Gulf seafood is safe to eat," said Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez. "That's great news for the Gulf Coast fishing industry, which represents one-fifth of our nation's commercial fishery production, and for all of us who enjoy seafood."

Since two weeks after Katrina made landfall, NOAA has been collecting and analyzing Gulf seafood, water and sediment for signs of bacteria and contaminants. The samples have consistently found no threat to human health. In December 2005, the U.S. government issued a multi-agency announcement declaring Gulf seafood safe to eat after extensive sampling and testing by the EPA, FDA, NOAA and the states found no cause for concern. NOAA has continued to monitor Gulf seafood for potential bio-accumulation of chemicals that were introduced into the Gulf of Mexico when floodwaters were pumped from the streets of New Orleans.

NOAA has received supplemental funding to continue monitoring post-hurricane environmental conditions in the Gulf of Mexico, and will report additional findings as warranted.

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On the Web:  
NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>  
NOAA Fisheries Service: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>