

# COMMERCE NEWS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CONTACT:** Office of Public Affairs  
202-482-4883

## **Commerce Secretary Gutierrez Declares Fishery Resource Disaster for Gulf of Mexico**

**MIAMI** – U.S. Commerce Secretary M. Carlos Gutierrez today announced a formal determination of a fishery resource disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, due to the devastation following Hurricanes Gustav and Ike.

“The economic impacts of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike on fishing communities in the Gulf of Mexico will hurt these communities,” Gutierrez said. “We have a lot of work to do, but this disaster determination is an important step in the recovery process.”

The fishery resource disaster determination was made pursuant to provisions of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act that authorize assistance to fishermen affected by natural disasters. This action also makes small fishing businesses eligible for certain Small Business Administration loans.

NOAA’s Fisheries Service will work with the states to distribute any funds appropriated in response to this determination.

Commercial fishing in the affected areas consists mostly of finfish, shrimp and oysters. NOAA will work with the states to further assess damage to the major fishing ports and the seafood processing facilities in Louisiana and Texas.

“Working with the states, NOAA will continue efforts to assess fishing industry damage and long-term impacts to the marine environment,” said Jim Balsiger, director of NOAA’s Fisheries Service.

The initial affected areas under today's declaration are Texas and Louisiana. DOC/NOAA will continue to work with the region to assess the impacts of the storm in other areas of the Gulf.

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Secretary Gutierrez is in Miami, Fla. today to visit the National Hurricane Center and discuss the U.S. government’s efforts to provide hurricane disaster relief to the Gulf

Coast. He also will tour a U.S. Agency for International Development warehouse to discuss the offers of humanitarian aid that have been rejected by Cuba, following the devastation caused by Hurricanes Gustav and Ike.