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NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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HURRICANE RITA TRIGGERS ADDITIONAL FISHERY FAILURE AND FISHERY RESOURCE DISASTER DECLARATION IN LOUISIANA, TEXAS

U.S. Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez today announced a formal determination of a fishery failure in Louisiana and Texas due to the devastation following Hurricane Rita. The affected area includes the Gulf of Mexico coastal areas of both states.

The determination came in response to major flooding and fishery infrastructure damage caused by Hurricane Rita. A similar declaration was made last month in the wake of Hurricane Katrina from Pensacola, Florida, west to the Louisiana/Texas border.

"Hurricane Rita has added to the difficulties of fishing communities in Louisiana and Texas," Secretary Gutierrez said. "The commercial oyster, shrimp and finfish industries are major contributors to the Gulf Coast economy and have been seriously affected."

The action was made through provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, which authorizes assistance to assess the impacts, restore the fisheries, prevent future failure, and assist fishing communities' recovery efforts after a natural disaster, and the Inter-jurisdictional Act, which authorizes that funds can be made available for assistance to fishermen to alleviate harm resulting from a natural disaster.

"NOAA will work with Louisiana and Texas to assess fishing industry damage and long-term impacts to the marine environment," said Bill Hogarth, director of NOAA's Fisheries Service.

The Administration will work with Congress and affected states to identify on-the-ground needs and determine how to best leverage resources to assist fisherman in the area.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners and nearly 60 countries to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes.

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On the Web:
NOAA: www.noaa.gov
NOAA Fisheries Service: www.nmfs.noaa.gov