



# **NEWS FROM NOAA**

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

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### **NOAA SCIENTIST FORECAST A POSITIVE SHRIMP SEASON FOR WESTERN GULF OF MEXICO**

Scientists from NOAA Fisheries Service are forecasting an above average year for production of brown shrimp in western Gulf of Mexico offshore waters. Overall, the western Gulf of Mexico can expect an annual brown shrimp production of approximately 58.8 million pounds during the 2007-2008 season (July 1 – June 30). This estimate is based on the total forecasts for both Texas and Louisiana, where brown shrimp yield is forecast to be 25.9 million pounds off Texas and 32.9 million pounds off Louisiana. Although the forecast is slightly lower than last year's forecast of 61.6 million pounds, it is above the 1960-2004 historical average of 56.8 million pounds for the two-state area.

Brown shrimp are an economically important commercial fishery for the Gulf of Mexico. These shrimp are used both for food consumption and for bait in recreational fishing. "Our forecasts show there will be plenty of shrimp to catch," said Dr. Roger Zimmerman, Director for NOAA Fisheries Service's Galveston Laboratory. "We still have a year to go, but we believe it will be a good one and it will follow the success of 2006."

Although shrimp are only about 3 percent of the weight of all fish and shellfish commercially harvested in the United States, they are among the most valuable of commercial fisheries bringing in as much as \$500 million dockside annually. Almost 80 percent of all the shrimp harvested in the United States comes from the Gulf of Mexico and most of it comes from Texas and Louisiana.

Young brown shrimp enter estuaries in Texas and Louisiana in mid-February and continue through July, with peak immigration occurring between February and early April. The most important environmental conditions affecting the fate of young shrimp as they grow in estuaries are temperature, salinity and tidal water height. Optimal shrimp growth is in water with temperatures above 68 degrees Fahrenheit and favorable nursery conditions are related to high Spring tides that bring salty Gulf waters in to flood the coastal marshes. Rainfall early this Spring was above normal and it resulted in lower salinities, most notably in May. These lower salinities resulted in juvenile shrimp being concentrated in the lower parts of Texas and Louisiana bays during most of May. During the last week of May, southeast winds and high tides pushed in higher salinity waters allowing brown shrimp to move into the upper bays and expand their use of nursery areas.

Each June, scientists at the NOAA Fisheries Service's Southeast Fisheries Science Center's Galveston Laboratory forecast brown shrimp production from the western Gulf of Mexico for the upcoming year (July 2007 – June 2008). Data obtained from the Galveston

Laboratory's Fishery Management and Ecology Branches, NOAA Fisheries port agents, National Climatic Data and Weather Centers, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and the commercial shrimp industry contribute to this forecast. Juvenile brown shrimp abundance and growth estimates are obtained through monitoring the inshore commercial shrimp fisheries in Texas and the inshore and nearshore fisheries in Louisiana.

*NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitats 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.*

*In 2007 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, celebrates 200 years of science and service to the nation. From the establishment of the Survey of the Coast in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson to the formation of the Weather Bureau and the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries in the 1870s, much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA.*

*NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by 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, more than 60 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.*

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**Media Note:**

Photo of brown shrimp available upon request.

**On the Web:**

Galveston Laboratory: <http://galveston.ssp.nmfs.gov/galv>

NOAA Fisheries Service: [www.nmfs.noaa.gov](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov)

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