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NOAA Expands Fishing Closed Area in Gulf of Mexico
Approximately 68 Percent of Gulf Still Open for Fishing

NOAA has extended the northern and southern boundaries of the closed fishing area in the Gulf of Mexico to capture portions of the slick moving into waters off eastern Alabama and the western tip of the Florida panhandle, as well as some large patches of sheen moving onto the west Florida shelf and southward to Cuban waters.

This federal closure does not apply to any state waters. Closing fishing in these areas is a precautionary measure to ensure that seafood from the Gulf will remain safe for consumers.

The closed area now represents 75,920 square miles, which is slightly more than 31 percent of Gulf of Mexico federal waters. This leaves more than 68 percent of Gulf federal waters available for fishing. The closure will be effective at 6:00 p.m. EDT. Details can be found at <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/>. The last closed area modification was May 31, when 61,854 square miles were closed to fishing, or roughly 26 percent of federal waters of the Gulf.

This extension of the federal fishing closed area due to the Deepwater Horizon/BP oil spill coincides with the June 1 opening of the Gulf of Mexico recreational red snapper season, and will affect some areas targeted by charter boat captains and private anglers.

However, NOAA's Fisheries Service is increasing the level of data collection to more closely monitor the effects of the oil spill on Gulf recreational fishing. This will allow the agency to adjust the closure date for recreational fishing seasons as appropriate, including the red snapper season which is scheduled to close at 12:01 a.m. July 24.

The federal and state governments have systems in place to test and monitor seafood safety, prohibit harvesting from affected areas, and keep oiled products out of the marketplace. NOAA continues to work closely with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the states to ensure seafood safety, by closing fishing areas where tainted seafood could potentially be caught, and assessing whether seafood is tainted or contaminated to levels that pose a risk to human health. NOAA and FDA are working to implement a broad-scaled seafood sampling plan. The plan includes sampling seafood from inside and outside the closure area, as well as dockside- and market-based sampling.

According to NOAA, there are approximately 5.7 million recreational fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico region who took 25 million fishing trips in 2008. Commercial fishermen in the Gulf harvested more than one billion pounds of fish and shellfish in 2008.

Fishermen who wish to contact BP about a claim should call 800-440-0858.

NOAA will continue to evaluate the need for fisheries closures based on the evolving nature of the spill and will re-open closed areas as appropriate. NOAA will also re-evaluate the closure areas as new information that would change the boundaries of these closed areas becomes available.

NOAA has a number of new methods for the public to obtain information or be notified when there is a change to the closed area:

- Sign up to receive Southeast Fishery Bulletins by email at SERO.Communications.Comments@noaa.gov
- Call 1-800-627-NOAA (1-800-627-6622) to hear a recording of the current coordinates
- Listen to NOAA Weather Radio for messages about the closure
- Receive text messages on your cell phone about changes to the closed area by texting **fishing@gulf** to 84469 (visit <http://www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com/go/doc/2931/558107> for more information)
- Follow us on Twitter: usnoaagov to get a tweet when the closed area changes

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