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NOAA Reopens Nearly 3,000 Square Miles in the Gulf of Mexico to Fishing
90 percent of federal waters now open

NOAA today reopened to commercial and recreational fishing 2,927 square miles of Gulf waters off eastern Louisiana, directly south and southwest of East Bay. This is the eighth reopening in federal waters since July 22.

This reopening was announced after consultation with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and under a [reopening protocol](#) agreed to by NOAA, the FDA, and the Gulf states.

"Today's reopening is great news for fishermen and the seafood industry in Louisiana," Commerce Secretary Gary Locke. "We look forward to reopening more federal waters, as this provides greater access to commercial and recreational activities, and continues to build consumer confidence in Gulf seafood."

The total area reopened today is about 1 percent of federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico and 11 percent of the current closed area, as last modified on October 1. No oil or sheen has been documented in the area since July 31. At its closest point, the area to be reopened is about 40 miles south of the Deepwater Horizon BP wellhead.

NOAA began sampling the area on July 28 and again August 21 through September 18 for shrimp and finfish, including tuna, mahi mahi and red snapper. Sensory analyses of 81 finfish and 5 shrimp samples and chemical analyses of 93 finfish samples in 10 composites and 21 shrimp samples in 3 composites followed the methodology and procedures in the reopening protocol, with sensory analysis finding no detectable oil or dispersant odors or flavors, and results of chemical analysis for oil-related compounds well below the levels of concern.

NOAA will continue to take samples for testing from the newly reopened area. The agency will also continue dockside sampling to test fish caught throughout the Gulf by commercial fishermen.

Fishing closures remain the first line of defense to prevent contaminated seafood from entering the marketplace. NOAA continues to work closely with the FDA and the Gulf states to ensure seafood safety. NOAA and FDA are working together on broad-scale seafood sampling that includes sampling seafood from inside and outside the closure area, as well as dockside and market-based sampling.

The remaining closed area now covers 23,360 square miles, or about 10 percent of the federal waters in the Gulf. The boundary of the fishery closure has changed 29 times after it was first instituted on May 2, at which time it covered about 3 percent (6,817 square miles) of Gulf waters around the wellhead. As oil continued to spill from the wellhead, the area grew in size, peaking at 37 percent (88,522 square miles) of Gulf waters on June 2. To date, NOAA has reopened more than 60,000 square miles of oil-impacted federal waters under this protocol and sampling regime.

NOAA will continue to evaluate the need for fisheries closures and will re-open closed areas as appropriate.

NOAA has a number of 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 in English, Vietnamese, and Spanish
- 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 **fishng@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

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Visit us at <http://www.noaa.gov> or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/usnoaagov>.

On the Web:

History of federal reopenings in the Gulf: <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/BPOilSpillArchives.htm>

Schedule of sampling priority areas:

http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2010/20100927_reopening.html

