



Contact: Kim Amendola
727-403-6533

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NOAA Closes Commercial and Recreational Fishing in Oil-Affected Portion of Gulf of Mexico

NOAA is restricting fishing for a minimum of ten days in federal waters most affected by the BP oil spill, largely between Louisiana state waters at the mouth of the Mississippi River to waters off Florida's Pensacola Bay (map attached). The closure is effective immediately. Details can be found here: <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/>. Fishermen who wish to contact BP about a claim should call 800-440-0858.

"NOAA scientists are on the ground in the area of the oil spill taking water and seafood samples in an effort to ensure the safety of the seafood and fishing activities," said Dr. Jane Lubchenco, NOAA Administrator, who met with more than 100 fishermen in Louisiana's Plaquemines Parish on Friday night. "I heard the concerns of the Plaquemines Parish fishermen as well other fishermen and state fishery managers about potential economic impacts of a closure. Balancing economic and health concerns, this order closes just those areas that are affected by oil. There should be no health risk in seafood currently in the marketplace."

"We stand with America's fisherman, their families and businesses in impacted coastal communities during this very challenging time. Fishing is vital to our economy and our quality of life and we will work tirelessly protect to it," said Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke. NOAA is a bureau of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The federal and state governments have strong systems in place to test and monitor seafood safety and to prohibit harvesting from affected areas and keeping oiled products out of the marketplace. NOAA Fisheries is working closely with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the States to ensure seafood safety, by assessing whether seafood is tainted or contaminated to levels that pose a risk to human health.

"There are finfish, crabs, oysters and shrimp in the Gulf of Mexico near the area of the oil spill," said Roy Crabtree, NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Administrator. "The Gulf is such an important biologic and economic area in terms of seafood production and recreational fishing."

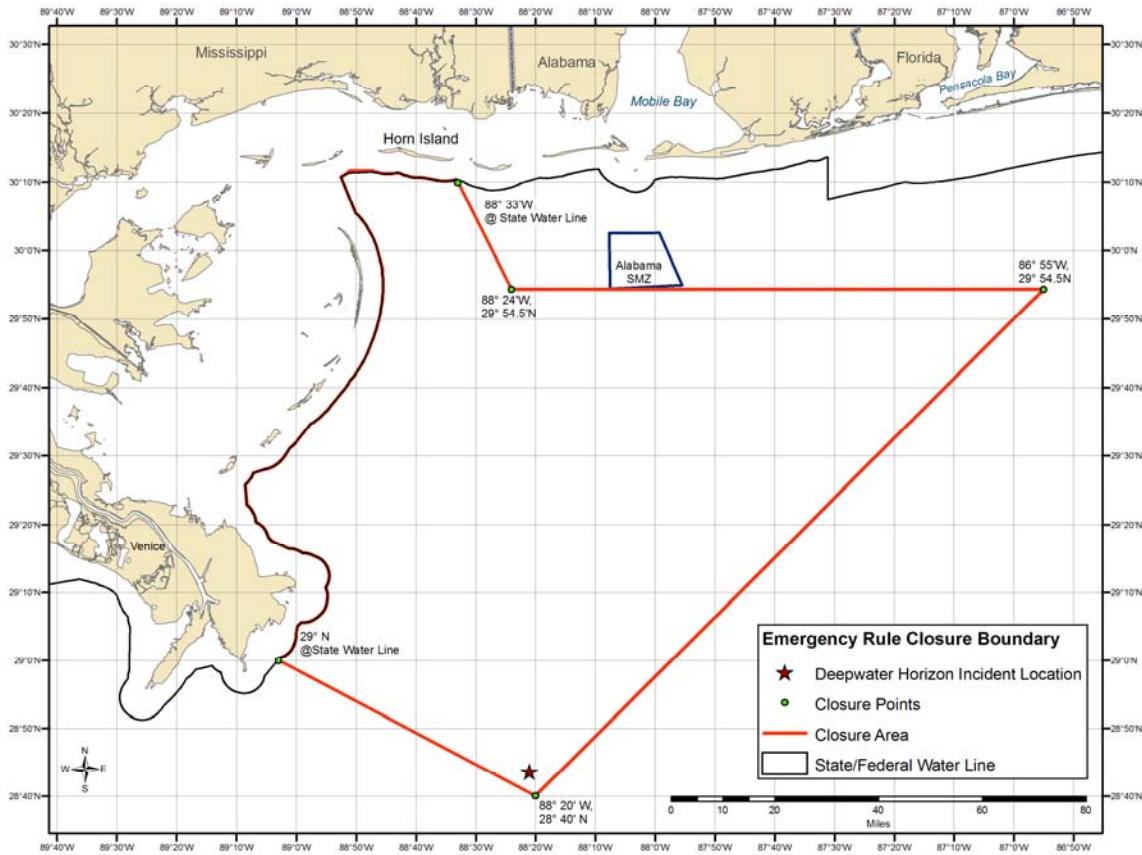
According to NOAA, there are 3.2 million recreational fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico region who took 24 million fishing trips in 2008. Commercial fishermen in the Gulf harvested more than 1 billion pounds of finfish and shellfish in 2008.

NOAA is working with the state governors to evaluate the need to declare a fisheries disaster in order to facilitate federal aid to fishermen in these areas. NOAA fisheries representatives in the region will be meeting with fishermen this week to assist them. The states of Louisiana and Mississippi have requested NOAA to declare a federal fisheries disaster. BP will be hiring fishermen to help clean up from the spill and deploy boom in the Gulf of Mexico. Interested fishermen should call 425-745-8017.

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

NOAA understands and predicts changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources.

Visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.



Oil Spill Claims Information

BP is now accepting claims for the Gulf Coast oil spill. Please call BP's helpline at 1-800-440-0858.

See a BP fact sheet here for additional information ([Click here to view fact sheet](#))

If you are not satisfied with BP's resolution, there is an additional avenue for assistance available through the Coast Guard once BP has finalized your claim. Those who have already pursued the BP claims process can call the Coast Guard at 1-800-280-7118.

More information about what types of damages are eligible for compensation under the Oil Pollution Act as well as guidance on procedures to seek that compensation can be found below and at www.uscg.mil/npfc.

For more information about the response and recovery efforts and to sign up for updates from the Joint Information Center, go to <http://www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com>

Types of Claims

Claim Type

Description

Who Can Submit

[Natural Resource Damages \(NRD\)](#)

Costs for:
Assessing an area's natural resource damages,
Restoring the natural resources, and
Compensating the public for the lost use of the affected resources.

Only specially designated [natural resource trustees](#)

[Removal Costs](#)

Costs to prevent, minimize, mitigate, or clean up an oil spill.
(The costs of cleaning up your own property fall under the category of property damage, not removal costs.)

Clean-up contractors, called Oil Spill Recovery Organizations (OSROs)
Federal, State, and local government entities
The [responsible party](#)

		Anyone who helped clean up the spill
<u>Property Damage</u>	Injury to or economic loss resulting from destruction of real property (land or buildings) or other personal property. Does not include personal injury!	People or entities who own or lease the damaged property
<u>Boat Damage</u>	Injury to or economic loss resulting from damage to a boat (a subset of property damage).	People or entities who own or lease the damaged boat
<u>Loss of Profits & Earning Capacity</u>	Damages equal to the loss of profits or impairment of earning capacity due to the injury, destruction, or loss of property or natural resources	Anyone with loss of profits or income (You do not have to own the damaged property or resources to submit a claim under this category.)
Loss of Subsistence Use of Natural Resources	Loss of subsistence use claim if natural resources you depend on for subsistence use purposes have been injured, destroyed, or lost by an oil spill incident.	Anyone who, for subsistence use, depends on natural resources that have been injured, destroyed, or lost (You do not have to own or manage the natural resource to submit a claim under this category.)
<u>Loss of Government Revenue</u>	Net loss of taxes, royalties, rents, fees, or net profit shares due to the injury, destruction, or loss of real property, personal property, or natural resources	Federal agencies States Local governments
<u>Increased Public Services</u>	Net costs of providing increased or additional public services during or after removal activities, including protection from fire, safety, or health hazards, caused by a discharge of oil or directly attributable to response to the oil spill incident	States Local governments

Claim Format

There is no required format for claims. You must, however, support your claim with documentation, put the claim in writing, and sign it.

Background

The primary source of revenue for the fund is a nine-cents per barrel fee on imported and domestic oil. Collection of this fee ceased on December 31, 1994 due to a "sunset" provision in the law. Other revenue sources for the fund include interest on the fund, cost recovery from the parties responsible for the spills, and any fines or civil penalties collected. The Fund is administered by the [U.S. Coast Guard's National Pollution Funds Center \(NPFC\)](#).

The Fund can provide up to \$1 billion for any one oil pollution incident, including up to \$500 million for the initiation of natural resource damage assessments and claims in connection with any single incident. The main uses of Fund expenditures are:

State access for removal actions;

Payments to Federal, state, and Indian tribe trustees to carry out natural resource damage assessments and restorations;

Payment of claims for uncompensated removal costs and damages; and

Research and development and other specific appropriations.

Structure of the Fund

The OSLTF has two major components.

The Emergency Fund is available for Federal On-Scene Coordinators (FOSCs) to respond to discharges and for federal trustees to initiate natural resource damage assessments. The Emergency Fund is a recurring \$50 million available to the President annually.

The remaining Principal Fund balance is used to pay claims and to fund appropriations by Congress to Federal agencies to administer the provisions of OPA and support research and development.