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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**NOAA Reopens More Than 5,000 Square Miles in the Gulf of Mexico to Fishing**  
*89 percent of federal waters now open*

NOAA today reopened to commercial and recreational fishing 5,628 square miles of Gulf waters off eastern Louisiana, just west of the Mississippi River delta. This is the seventh 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.

“Reopening these critical fishing grounds signals progress and is important for the long-term recovery of the Gulf’s commercial and recreational industries,” said Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. “Our tests continue to reveal that Gulf seafood is safe for consumption. We will not reopen an area until we are certain the seafood from it is safe.”

The total area reopened today is about two percent of federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico and 18 percent of the current closed area, as last modified on September 21. No oil or sheen has been documented in the area since August 6. At its closest point, the area to be reopened is about 75 statute miles south of the BP Deepwater wellhead.

NOAA began sampling the area on July 27 but suspended sampling when oil was observed by scientists aboard the sampling vessel. NOAA conducted a second and complete sampling of the area between August 15 and September 19 for finfish and shrimp once the area was known to be completely free of oil. Sensory analyses of 89 finfish and 25 shrimp samples, and chemical analyses of 188 finfish in 15 composites and 75 shrimp in 15 composites collected after August 15, followed the methodology and procedures in the reopening protocol. Sensory analysis found no detectable oil or dispersant odors or flavors, and the results of chemical analysis were 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 26,287 square miles, or about 11 percent of the federal waters in the Gulf. The boundary of the fishery closure has changed 28 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 re-

opened more than 52,000 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](mailto: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 **fishing@gulf** to 84469 (visit [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/deepwater\\_horizon\\_oil\\_spill.htm](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/deepwater_horizon_oil_spill.htm) 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](http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2010/20100927_reopening.html)