



NOAA NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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NOAA Reopens Nearly 8,000 Square Miles in the Gulf of Mexico to Fishing
87 percent of federal waters now open

NOAA today reopened to commercial and recreational fishing 7,970 square miles of Gulf waters along the southern boundary of the federal closed area. This area is about 60 nautical miles off of central Louisiana and about 140 nautical miles off Mississippi, Alabama, and the western edge of the Florida panhandle. This is the sixth reopening in federal waters since July 22.

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

“This area is significant to commercial and recreational fishermen who target tunas and billfish that migrate far and wide and provide an important source of income and sport,” said Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. “We’ll continue to work with our partners at FDA and the Gulf states to ensure our Gulf seafood is safe, so we can reopen more areas to fishing.”

The total area reopened today is about three percent of federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico and 20 percent of the current closed area, as last modified on September 3. No oil or sheen has been documented in the area since July 21. At its closest point, the area to be reopened is about 50 statute miles south of the Deepwater/BP wellhead.

Between July 31 and August 10, NOAA sampled the area for pelagic finfish, including tuna and billfish. Sensory analyses of 93 samples and chemical analyses of 92 samples in 18 composites followed the methodology and procedures in the re-opening protocol, with sensory analysis finding no detectable oil or dispersant odors or flavors, and results of chemical analysis well below the levels of concern.

NOAA will continue to take samples for testing from the newly re-opened 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 31,915 square miles, or about 13 percent of the federal waters in the Gulf. The boundary of the fishery closure has changed 27 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 over 44,000 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 **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

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>

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