



BP's Deepwater Oil Spill - Fishing Resumes - and Open Thread

Posted by [Gail the Actuary](#) on August 21, 2010 - 10:30am

Topic: [Environment/Sustainability](#)

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On Friday, the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission reopened waters that had been closed to recreational fishing. Some of those areas had been closed since April 30. Now, after more than 100 days, [all state waters](#) are open to fishing for finfish. About 11% of state waters remain closed for fishing for shrimp and crabs.

Dr. Jane Lubchenco, NOAA administrator, explained in an August 18 [press conference](#) that fin fish are capable of metabolizing hydrocarbons that are harmful to human health:

We are continuing to sample those areas that have already been reopened to make sure that the seafood remains safe. And I think it's important to recognize that fin fish are capable of metabolizing the hydrocarbons that might be of concern to human health. They process them. They rid their bodies of them. The flesh does not retain hydrocarbons like it does something like mercury.

So hydrocarbons can be metabolized by fin fish very rapidly. It can be metabolized by shrimp and crabs more slowly and by shellfish, such as oysters, the slowest.

So we are testing each of those different categories – fin fish, shrimp and crabs, and, thirdly, shellfish – separately, because we understand – so the testing is cognizant of the different physiologies of the different species. And we are very careful in opening to specify that an area has been determined safe for fin fish, for example, or for everything.

At this point, 22% of federal waters remain closed to fishing. At the peak, 37% of federal waters were closed to fishing.

Despite statements by federal--and now state--officials, there are still some who are concerned about seafood safety. Government officials will continue testing fish, even in areas that have been determined to be safe, to make certain there are no signs of contamination.

The [New Orleans Times observes](#):

The full effect of the oil spill on the environment and the economy is unknown. It's hard to get a clear accounting of the oil's impact on the Gulf when experts are fighting about how much broken-down petroleum and dispersed toxins are under the water's surface, possibly waiting to wreak havoc at a later date. It's hard to separate the true impacts

from the perceived ones when shrimpers are passing up the opening day of white shrimp season to do cleanup work and restaurants aren't buying the day's catch because their patrons, with no scientific basis, are afraid of eating Gulf seafood.

So the story is not yet finished. Much is still unknown. And the outcome for the seafood industry depends on perception as much as scientific evidence.



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