

# Aquatic life dying in Gulf mystery

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Researchers are looking for answers as aquatic life dies in the "dead zone" moving through the southeastern Gulf of Mexico.

The Naples (Fla.) Daily News reports animals and plant life are dying as oxygen depleted water travels south down Florida's coast.

Divers and fishermen say they have found dead coral and sponges that crumble when they are touched, dead crabs on the ocean floor and fish floating on the surface.

Experts have many theories about the mysterious devastation that is estimated at covering more than 2,000 square miles of the Gulf of Mexico.

A red tide that carries with it toxic algae has been spotted and is thought to be linked to the release of freshwater from Lake Okeechobee into the Gulf.

Cindy Heil of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission said Hurricane Katrina may have moved the water enough to trap a collection of the red tide in a certain area.

As for the lack of oxygen in parts of the water, Heil said a warmer than average surface water could limit oxygen movement in the cool waters at the bottom of the ocean.

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