

Nearly all Gulf of Mexico waters open to fishing after spill

November 15 2010



Fishing vessels sit at port after the government closed parts of the Gulf of Mexico to fishing due to the massive oil spill in May 2010 in Gulfport, Mississippi. Nearly all US federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico are now open to fishing, in the latest sign of recovery from a huge oil spill, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said Monday.

Nearly all US federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico are now open to fishing, in the latest sign of recovery from a huge oil spill, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said Monday.

The agency said it has reopened 8,403 square miles (21,764 square kilometers) of Gulf waters to commercial and recreational fishing, extending from the Louisiana state water line to due south of the Alabama and Florida state line. The move meant 99.6 percent of federal waters were now open.

It was the 11th such opening since July 22, NOAA said, noting that "no oil or sheen has been documented" since July 25.

At its closest point, the newly reopened area is about 10 miles (16 kilometers) from BP's busted wellhead, which gushed nearly five million barrels of oil into the sea after an April 20 explosion on a BP-leased drilling rig off Louisiana's coast that killed 11 workers.

NOAA said a battery of tests had found that levels of oil-related compounds and dispersants in marine life were "well below the levels of concern."

"This is the first reopening where we have added a supplemental test to detect dispersants in seafood, and all the samples passed," said NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco, who is also under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator.

"This is yet another indication that our Gulf seafood is safe for consumption."

Over 88,000 square miles (229,000 square kilometers) were once closed to fishing due to concerns over the devastating spill, which continues to impact the Gulf's environment and economy.

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Citation: Nearly all Gulf of Mexico waters open to fishing after spill (2010, November 15) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-11-gulf-mexico-fishing.html>

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