

This is the html version of the file [http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/deepwater\\_horizon/Closure\\_FAQs\\_060310.pdf](http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/deepwater_horizon/Closure_FAQs_060310.pdf).  
**Google** automatically generates html versions of documents as we crawl the web.

## **BP/Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill: Federal Fishery Closure Frequently Asked Questions June 2010**

### **Why is NOAA Fisheries Service prohibiting fishing in certain areas?**

NOAA Fisheries Service prohibited fishing as a precautionary measure to ensure public safety and assure consumer confidence in **Gulf of Mexico** seafood.

NOAA Fisheries Service strongly advises fishermen not to **fish** in areas where oil sheens (very thin layers of floating oil) are present, even if those areas are not currently closed to fishing.

A process to expedite modifications to the fishing closed area in the **Gulf of Mexico** established. Boundaries of the fishing closed area can be modified daily, based on daily oil spill conditions.

### **Where is the fishery closure located?**

A map with the coordinates of the closed area and other materials can be viewed on Southeast Regional Office [BP Oil Spill web page](#).

The coordinates can be heard on NOAA Weather Radio or by calling 1-800-627-NC (800-627-6622).

A list of dates of the closure modifications and the areas covered can be found at <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/ClosureSizeandPercentCoverage.htm>.

### **What criteria and protocol does NOAA use to close fishing areas?**

A combination of computer modeling and daily overflights. Sophisticated computer produce trajectory maps of where the oil is likely to be in 24, 48 and 72-hour time fi based upon weather, satellite imagery, ocean buoy data, and ocean currents. This tra is truth-tested by daily overflights to verify the actual extent of the oil.

Managers review data each morning and post a decision regarding whether to expan closed area boundary or maintain the current boundary by 12 p.m. Eastern Time eac Changes to the closed area boundary are communicated to the public via fishery bul NOAA Weather Radio, and by posting new maps and explanatory materials to the S Regional Office website.

Any changes to the closed area boundary take effect at 6 p.m. Eastern Time to provi fishermen adequate time to respond to the notification and plan the next day's activi

You can sign up for Twitter or text alerts when the closed area changes by visiting t Southeast Regional Office [BP Oil Spill web page](#).

### **May vessels transit the closed area?**

Yes. The rule prohibits fishing within the closed area. The rule does not prohibit tra or the possession of **fish** within the closed area.

---

**Page 2**

### **Is catch-and-release fishing allowed within the closed area?**

No. Currently all fishing is prohibited within the closed area.

NOAA Fisheries Service may consider opening areas to catch-and-release fishing; h we need to better understand the potential risks of the spill and response activities tc fishermen and fishery resources, as well as law enforcement issues, before determin whether such action is appropriate.

### **Is diving allowed in the closed area?**

Yes. The rule prohibits all fishing, including spearfishing, within the closed area, bu other activities.

NOAA Fisheries Service urges divers to use caution and avoid diving in areas with :

oil.

### **What are the criteria for re-opening closed areas?**

An area will be reopened when there is no longer a risk of seafood contamination or adulteration.

- o NOAA Fisheries Service will open areas that were closed based on the oil spill trajectory if cumulative mapping shows no oil was ever in the area.
- o When the oil spill is contained or the oil is no longer present in an area, cleanup underway, and/or there are indications the cleanup is reducing the presence of oil, the acceptability of the seafood can be assessed. This assessment includes sampling followed by sensory and chemical analysis to detect the presence of oil samples.

### **How does NOAA Fisheries Service conduct analysis of seafood?**

NOAA Fisheries Service has developed screening methods to quickly assess contaminant loads in water and in seafood; e.g. shrimp, crabs, finfish.

Sensory Analysis: Federal and state sensory testing analysts have been trained to detect certain thresholds of chemicals that are not normal to **fish** background odors.

**fish** sample is tested by 10 trained expert assessors who conduct a blind nose sensor evaluation of the raw odor of the **fish**. If the **fish** passes the sensory **smell** test, the analyst will cook it and sensory **smell** test again. If the sample passes that test, the analyst will take a sample to ensure no contamination. NOAA has 40 screeners and 15 expert assessors currently training another 40 screeners and 15 expert assessors.

Chemical Analysis: The standards applied for oil are based on current standards developed by the FDA.

It is likely that NOAA Fisheries Service will be developing new standards for dispersants. NOAA is working with the FDA in the implementation of these new standards.

**What is NOAA Fisheries Service doing to account for changes in fishing effort due to oil spill when estimating the length of 2010 recreational fishing seasons?**

NOAA Fisheries Service is reviewing legal authorities and considering options for adjusting fishing season dates in response to the movement of the oil slick and associated fishery impacts.

Beginning June 1, the **Gulf of Mexico** Fisheries Information Network (**Gulf FIN**) program will provide weekly, rather than bimonthly, tracking of changes in charter boat fishing in the **Gulf of Mexico** that may be related to the recent oil spill.

This increase in data collection will allow a more precise estimation of the total number of trips made by anglers on for-hire fishing vessels.

In addition to the increased sampling, questions are being added to the survey to assess fishing trip cancellations directly related to the oil spill.

Results from the sampling will be used to evaluate fishery closures for species such as snapper and greater amberjack. If sampling indicates quotas are not being met prior to closure, NOAA Fisheries Service could increase the season length if warranted.

**What are the restrictions on federally permitted vessels while fishing in state waters?**

If state waters are closed to fishing due to the oil spill, all vessels must comply with the state closure.

If state waters are not closed to fishing due to the oil spill, federally permitted vessels must abide by **fish** in those waters while abiding by all other applicable regulations.