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### Gulf oil spill: Federal officials taking fish samples for testing

May 6, 2010 | 2:03 pm

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's staff members have been taking samples of oysters, crab, shrimp and fish from Mobile Bay, Ala., and other untainted areas of the Gulf of Mexico this week. The samples are being sent to the agency's labs in Gloucester, Mass., and Seattle for chemical analysis and other tests.

The agency is also pulling samples of seafood from wholesale outlets and retailers in Gulf Coast states for testing, said agency spokesman Brian Gorman.

The goal, he said, was to establish a baseline of "what healthy fish and healthy water looks like, so we have something to compare it to as the days go by."

The testing will check for contamination in the shells and meat, as well as test for "sensory" aspects – such as smell and taste – that would indicate something is wrong, Gorman said.

None of the tests are complete yet, and agency officials said it was too early to know when the results would be final. However, Gorman said, NOAA officials had no reason to believe that tainted seafood had entered the nation's food chain.

"That's what we're trying to prevent," he said.

-- P.J. Huffstutter

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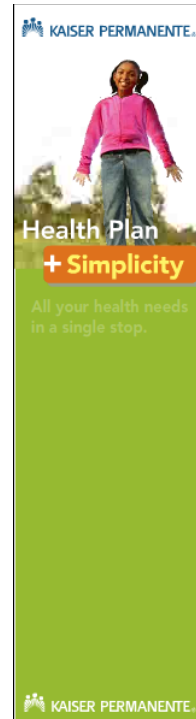
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