



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES
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News Release

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09-51-LST
June 25, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2009 MS Shrimp Season Opens South of Intracoastal Waterway

BILOXI, Miss. – The 2009 shrimp season officially opened in Mississippi territorial waters south of the Intracoastal Waterway at 6 a.m. June 25, with reports of small to average-size shrimp and low catch volumes.

The Department of Marine Resources' (DMR) Marine Fisheries staff was on the water conducting interviews and surveying shrimp boats the morning of opening day. A flyover was conducted to determine the number of shrimp boats on the water. About 230 commercial and recreational shrimp boats came out to work the partial opening.

The majority of boats were congregated on the inside west tip of Horn Island south of the Intracoastal Waterway, where they were catching low numbers of 60/70-count brown shrimp.

DMR will continue sampling to determine the opening date for waters north of the Intracoastal Waterway.

As of June 25, the number of commercial resident shrimp licenses sold was 372. The number of out-of-state commercial shrimp licenses sold was 163.

"The numbers of shrimp landed today were very few," said DMR's Shrimp and Crab Bureau Director Traci Floyd. "Most shrimping vessels will anchor or return to port and try their luck again tonight as catches tend to be better for brown shrimp at night. Others will wait until inside waters, where somewhat better shrimp abundance has been indicated, are open and the fuel investment won't be as high."

The DMR's Marine Patrol was out in full force starting at 6 p.m. June 24 and worked around the clock to ensure a smooth shrimp season opening. This included 26 officers, two reserve officers and three dispatchers. Marine Patrol officers conducted patrols from 12 patrol boats throughout the Mississippi Sound.

"Even with the partial opening, compliance rates were high," said Lt. Col. Claude Pittman, assistant chief of the DMR's Marine Patrol. "Like last year, we are thankful for the good weather we had during the opening. As of 3:15 p.m. (June 25) we've received no calls of boaters in distress."

The legal minimum size for shrimp in Mississippi is 68 shrimp per pound. This minimum average size is used as a standard for determining the opening date. Certain areas may be closed to shrimping activity if sampling indicates that a large number of small shrimp have moved into a particular area.

All regulations set by the DMR are to be in full force and effect, and all boats engaged in catching or transporting shrimp in or from the waters of Mississippi must be legally licensed.

For the latest updates on the Mississippi shrimp fishery, call the toll-free Shrimp Information Hotline 1-866-We Trawl (866-938-7295).

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The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, protecting and conserving marine interests of the state by managing all marine life, public trust wetlands, adjacent uplands and waterfront areas to provide for the optimal commercial, recreational, educational and economic uses of these resources consistent with environmental concerns and social changes. Visit the DMR online at dmr.ms.gov.

PHOTO CREDITS: Photos courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources.



PHOTO A CUTLINE: A shrimp vessel heads out June 25, opening day of the 2009 Mississippi shrimp season. About 230 recreational and commercial boats worked on the first day of the partial opening.



PHOTO B CUTLINE: A shrimp vessel heads out June 25, opening day of the 2009 Mississippi shrimp season. About 230 recreational and commercial boats worked on the first day of the partial opening.



PHOTO C CUTLINE: An aerial photograph shows shrimp vessels south of the Intracoastal Waterway on June 25, the opening day of Mississippi shrimp season, which brought out about 230 recreational and commercial boats.



PHOTO D CUTLINE: An aerial photograph shows a shrimp vessel dragging its nets south of the Intracoastal Waterway on June 25, the opening day of Mississippi shrimp season.

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