



**MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES**



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mississippi Oyster Tissue Samples Tested by NOAA and FDA Determined Safe for Human Consumption

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) and the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), in coordination with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), announce that Mississippi oysters are safe for human consumption. Mississippi oyster season is closed during the summer months and typically opens in September or October.

The procedures for reopening a fishery or proving seafood tissue samples are safe for consumption involve a comprehensive and concerted effort based on extensive sampling and testing conducted by the MDMR, MDEQ, NOAA and FDA. The steps involved in the process of reopening of a fishery that was closed as a precaution due to oil in the area are as follows:

1. There must be a low threat of oil exposure; the threat of exposure will be based on past observations and the status of the spill and conditions.
2. Evaluation of oil movement based on confirmation that the closure area is free of visible oil on the surface by visual observation and/or aerial reconnaissance or water testing.
3. Assessment of seafood contamination by sensory testing – Determine if the seafood is contaminated by tissue collection and sensory testing. The acceptable condition is that all specimens must pass sensory testing conducted by a NOAA-FDA expert sensory panel or a NOAA-FDA trained panel of state assessors.
4. Assessment of seafood contamination by chemical analyses – Chemical analyses are performed on samples that pass sensory assessment to confirm that PAH concentrations are below the applicable FDA levels of concern for human health. Tissue samples will continue to be tested every other week to insure seafood quality.

“We are pleased with the results that have come back from FDA and NOAA which show that our Mississippi oysters are safe to eat,” said MDMR Fisheries Director Dale Diaz. “Like all the seafood samples collected and tested from Mississippi territorial waters since the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, our Mississippi oyster tissue samples have undergone rigorous testing and have been proven to be well below levels of concern for hydrocarbons.”

“In the testing for the reopening of federal waters, we are finding similar results to what has been found in Mississippi state waters. Of the more than 1,700 federal samples tested, the levels of contaminants detected are 100 to 1,000 times lower than the threshold for what the FDA has identified as potentially harmful to humans,” said Dr. John Stein of NOAA’s Seafood Safety Program responding to the Gulf oil spill.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, and conserving marine interests of the state by managing all marine life, public 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 www.dmr.ms.gov.

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality safeguards the health, safety, and welfare of Mississippians by conserving and improving our environment and wise economic growth through focused research and responsible regulation.

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