



Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission
MyFWC.com

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Federal aid to help Florida's fishing industry requested

Gov. Charlie Crist has asked for federal assistance to help Florida's fishing industries and communities weather adverse impacts of the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Specifically, the governor has requested that the U.S. Commerce Department take action under federal law to provide aid to commercial fishermen, charter boat operators and coastal fishing communities.

"The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has been consulting with our fishing industry stakeholders very closely over the past several weeks," said FWC Chairman Rodney Barreto. "They are telling us they are struggling to stay afloat even though fishing is still open in Florida and seafood is still being harvested."

While Florida so far has been mostly spared from direct impacts of the oil spill in its coastal waters, Florida fishermen and coastal communities are already experiencing a significant loss of current and future income because of a mistaken public notion that all of Florida's waters have been tainted by the oil spill.

This is compounded by the fact that expanding federal fishery closures and the recent movement of oil towards the Florida Panhandle are considerably reducing fishing opportunities for commercial and charter boat fishermen, especially for important snapper and grouper species off the state's west coast.

Federal aid would help offset severe and immediate economic impacts to Florida's commercial grouper fleet and seafood dealers who are having trouble selling their products

because of unfounded fears that seafood from the Gulf is contaminated. Federal assistance also would help Florida's charter fishing fleet, for-hire guides and related fishing communities that are suffering, mainly because of misperceptions and misinformation about the extent and impact of the oil spill.

“We appreciate Gov. Crist taking the lead to help the people who help make Florida the ‘Fishing Capital of the World,’” Barreto said. “We will keep a close watch on the oil spill and respond to any impacts we may experience, but Florida is still open, and we encourage everyone to keep fishing and to enjoy Florida seafood products.”

Updated information regarding the FWC's response to the BP oil spill is available online at MyFWC.com/OilSpill.