

Closed fish-harvesting area in Escambia County reopens News Release

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Contact: Henry Cabbage, 850-528-1755

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) reopened state waters offshore of Escambia County to the harvest of saltwater fish, at 12:01 a.m. today, July 31. The FWC had closed this area on June 14 as a precautionary measure due to possible impacts of oil from the BP Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

"This is great news for all Floridians and particularly our coastal communities, where fishing is such an important component of their economy and way of life," said Nick Wiley, executive director of the FWC. "Reopening these Florida waters to fishing is a positive step forward in Florida's recovery from the BP oil spill. We can all be confident that fish caught in Florida waters are healthy and great to eat."

The FWC is reopening this 23-mile area of state waters because careful laboratory analysis of fish from the area confirms they are safe and oil-free. The sampling and laboratory analyses were conducted under the supervision of the United States Food and Drug Administration and NOAA. They passed all standards for safe consumption. Oil has not been observed in the closed area of state waters for some time and was being closely monitored by state officials using aerial over-flights and visual observations on the water.

The reopened area to the harvest of saltwater fish includes state waters from the beaches out 9 nautical miles into the Gulf from the Alabama line east to the Pensacola Beach water tower. Oysters, clams and mussels were not included in the closure and remain open to harvest in this area. The area will remain closed to the harvest of shrimp and crabs, pending additional testing.

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