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**Governor Crist Announces Closed Harvesting area in Escambia
County Reopens**

Governor Charlie Crist announced on Friday, July 30, that The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has reopened coastal state waters offshore of Escambia County to the harvest of saltwater fish, at 12:01 a.m. July 31. The FWC 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.

“The reopening of gulf waters for fishing is positive news for Floridians who depend on this important industry and for our recreational users and tourist,” said Governor Crist. “Florida seafood is safe to eat and I thank the Food and Drug Administration for completing the test so quickly.

The FWC is reopening this 23-mile closed 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.

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