

FWC Oil forces partial fishing closure in Escambia County

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The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), in coordination with Florida's Department of Environmental Protection, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the Department of Health, issued an executive order to temporarily close a portion of coastal state waters offshore of Escambia County to the harvest of saltwater fish, crabs and shrimp. The FWC is taking precautionary actions regarding harvest and consumption of these marine species, which may be affected by oil from the BP Deepwater Horizon spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

The closure includes state waters from the beaches out 9 nautical miles into the Gulf from the Alabama line east to the Pensacola Beach water tower. Interior bays and estuaries remain open to fishing. This area covers approximately 23 miles of Florida's coastline in Escambia County, where oil from the Deepwater Horizon spill is now present (see map).

Recreational catch-and-release fishing is still allowed as long as saltwater fish are not harvested or possessed in the closed area.

Oysters, clams and mussels are not included in the closure, because they are not expected to be affected by oil in the area. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services carefully monitors populations of these shellfish.

This order, which includes specific closure coordinates, [can be viewed online](http://MyFWC.com/OilSpill) at MyFWC.com/OilSpill and takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on Monday, June 14, and will remain in effect until repealed, extended or modified by a subsequent order. The order will be enforced by several state and federal agencies, and the affected area will remain closed until it is free of visible oil and testing confirms that the water and the marine life in it are once again safe.

Under the order, fishermen can transit through the closed area with saltwater fish, crabs or shrimp that were legally harvested outside the closed area. Fishermen doing this are required to go as directly as possible from where these species were legally harvested to where the vessel is regularly docked, moored or stored, or to the licensed wholesale dealer where the catch is to be sold.

"The oil spill in the Gulf is still far from most of Florida's vast coastlines, and while the FWC continues to carefully track oil spill developments and prepare for possible impacts, Florida's abundant saltwater fisheries remain in good health and the fish you buy in a commercial outlet or restaurant are safe and

wholesome to eat," said FWC Chairman Rodney Barreto. "The FWC encourages residents and visitors to go fishing in Florida and to enjoy fresh Florida seafood."

More information on FWC's response to the BP oil spill and closed fishing areas in federal waters offshore of Florida is available online at MyFWC.com/OilSpill.