

NOAA TO STUDY EFFECTS OF HURRICANE KATRINA; BIOLOGISTS WILL LOOK AT MARINE RESOURCES AND CONTAMINANTS



Sept. 13, 2005 — The [NOAA Research vessel the Nancy Foster](#) this week is working off the coasts of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama to study the effects of Hurricane Katrina on marine resources and the ecosystem. During the cruise, biologists will take water samples and look at sediments in the Mississippi river. They will test fish and shrimp for evidence of toxic contamination and pathogens that might affect human health. **(Click NOAA aerial image for larger view of oil spill in Meraux, La., taken on Sept. 3, 2005, as a NOAA Cessna Citation surveyed and photographed the regions affected by Hurricane Katrina. [Click here](#) for high resolution version. Please credit "NOAA.")**

"I've asked our fisheries scientists to work with other [NOAA](#) scientists on a major research cruise in the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina," said [Bill Hogarth](#), NOAA Fisheries Service director. "NOAA is implementing a suite of studies and tests to determine the effects of the hurricane on fish, marine mammals, sea turtles and the ecosystem they depend on for survival."

U.S. Commerce Secretary [Carlos Gutierrez](#) late last week announced a formal determination of a fishery failure in the Gulf of Mexico due to the devastation following Hurricane Katrina. The affected area includes the Florida Keys and from Pensacola, Fla., to the Texas border.

The action was made through provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, which makes federal relief funds available to assess the impacts, restore the fisheries, prevent future failure, and assist fishing communities' recovery efforts after a natural disaster, and the Inter-jurisdictional Act, which makes funds available for direct assistance to fishermen to alleviate harm resulting from a natural disaster.

NOAA is working with the states to assess damage to the 15 major fishing ports and the 177 seafood-processing facilities in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana.

"Our goals, and those of the fisheries directors of the affected states, are to determine the effects of the hurricane on the area's fish and shellfish, as well as the long-term impacts these might have on the commercial fishing industry," Hogarth added. "We also will be taking a look at the effects of Hurricane Katrina on inventories of fish processors, dealers and individual fishing related businesses."

In addition to the research cruise on the Nancy Foster, NOAA has chartered the shrimp-fishing vessel, the Patricia Jean, from Alabama to assist with sampling for evidence of toxic contamination and pathogens. NOAA biologists also are conducting overflights to look for marine mammals and sea turtles, and to assess the damage to wetlands.

Over the weekend NOAA conducted aerial flights and located eight dolphins, including two moms and their young that were swept out to sea during the hurricane from a pool at a local aquarium in Gulfport, Miss. Biologists are working to feed the dolphins until they can safely rescue them and place them in rehabilitation.

The NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving the nation's living marine resources and their habitats through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

NOAA, an agency of the [U.S. Department of Commerce](#), is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of the nation's coastal and marine resources.

Relevant Web Sites

[NOAA Fisheries Service](#)

[NOAA Aerial Images of USA Gulf Coast Impacted by Hurricane Katrina](#)

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