



## MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

# News Release

Contact: Melissa Scallan

Phone: 228-523-4124

15-21-MMS  
April 16, 2015

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### ***MDMR Marine Patrol arrests Alabama man for illegal harvest of sponge crabs***

BILOXI, Miss. – Marine Patrol officers with the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources have arrested an Alabama man on 215 charges of illegally harvesting sponge crabs.

Deuanetam Keovoravong, 47, of Irvington, Ala., faces a \$500 fine for each misdemeanor charge, as well as state assessments. He also is charged with failure to yield to blue lights and siren and tampering with evidence.

Officers Patrick Carron and Jada Whittington were on patrol last week near Chevron Refinery in Jackson County when they observed a commercial crab vessel in Bayou Cumbest. The officers attempted to stop the vessel for a regulatory compliance check, but the operator failed to yield to the emergency lights and siren and continued about 500 feet past the patrol boat.

Carron observed the operator, Keovoravong, throwing crabs overboard. Once officers stopped the vessel and checked it, they discovered the operator was illegally harvesting egg-bearing female crabs. State law prohibits the harvest of these types of crabs and specifically instructs the harvester to “immediately return the crab to the water.”

Officers discovered that Keovoravong had 215 illegally harvested crabs still on board after throwing several overboard before he was stopped. The officers later put the 215 crabs back in the water.

Marine Patrol officials consulted with Jackson County Prosecutor Mark Watts, and they decided that Keovoravong would be charged separately for each crab because of the potential significant impact this violation has on the blue crab population. He faces up to \$107,500 in charges. Justice Court Judge Jason Thornton issued a bond of \$40,000 for Keovoravong.

Marine Patrol Chief Keith Davis said this case is a prime example of MDMR’s commitment to securing Mississippi’s seafood industry.

“We must remain vigilant and use cutting-edge, covert strategies against those who choose to violate state law and administrative regulations,” Davis said.

The investigation is continuing.

**Photos courtesy Mississippi Department of Marine Resources**



**1. Keovoravong**



**2. MDMR Marine Patrol officers Patrick Carron, left, and Jada Whittington returned 215 sponge crabs to the water that were illegally harvested.**

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, protecting and conserving marine interests of the state by managing all marine life, public trust wetlands, adjacent uplands and waterfront areas to provide for the optimal commercial, recreational, educational and economic uses of these resources consistent with environmental concerns and social changes. Visit the DMR online at [www.dmr.ms.gov](http://www.dmr.ms.gov).