13-113-MMS
Nov. 2, 2013   <u>FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE</u>

MDMR issues statement on judge's ruling

BILOXI, Miss. – The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is pleased with Judge Jennifer Schloegel's decision Oct. 31 in the Gulf Publishing case. Judge Schloegel ruled that the MDMR did not violate the Mississippi Public Records Act.

Judge Schloegel is the second judge to rule that MDMR has complied with the law regarding requests from public documents made by the Sun Herald. On Jan. 22, 2013, Harrison County Circuit Judge Roger Clark issued a protective order saying the grand jury subpoena prevented the MDMR from responding to the Sun Herald's record request.

"The MDMR was confronted with the dilemma of complying with the Public Records Act and not violating a grand jury subpoena," Executive Director Jamie Miller said. Judge Clark and Judge Schloegel both determined that the MDMR responded correctly and did not violate either obligation.

"We have maintained all along we are willing to provide access to any public records in our possession with no exceptions," Miller said. "As soon as the documents subpoenaed by the State Auditor's Office are returned to this agency, we will make arrangements for the Sun Herald to have full access. We anticipate there will be a nominal cost, including staff time and use of office copiers and scanners. We will negotiate a fair arrangement as Judge Schloegel ordered."

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.

—END—