



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

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News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2014 shrimp season opening sees big shrimp, big hauls

BILOXI, Miss. – Nearly 370 boats filled the Mississippi Sound just before daybreak Wednesday, with shrimpers waiting eagerly for 6 a.m. so they could lower their trawls into the water for the start of this year's shrimp season.

Many boats could be seen from the beach Tuesday evening, iced down and fueled up in anticipation of the season opening.

The waters of the Sound did not disappoint as shrimpers showed off their catch early Wednesday, and they said the large numbers pointed to a good season.

John Guidry Jr. of Carriere, Miss., put his net in the water for less than an hour, and it was so heavy he needed two people to help him get it in his boat.

"This was a 45-minute haul," he said, smiling. "This is one of the best catches I've ever had in my life. The last time I caught shrimp like this, I ran out of ice."

Officials with the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources announced last week that shrimp season would begin Wednesday. Scientists sampled shrimp several times a week until they reached 68-count per pound as required by state statute.

"The opening of shrimp season is a great tradition on the Mississippi Gulf Coast," said Jamie Miller, executive director of the MDMR. "Its roots run deep in our community, with generations of fishermen providing great seafood that contributes significantly to South Mississippi's economy."

This year there were 368 boats in the water on opening day, the most since June 2005, said Rick Burris, director of the Shrimp and Crab Bureau. He is optimistic that this year's season will be a good one.

"Heavy spring rains and a cold winter lead to a later opening, but a successful one by all accounts," Burris said. "From our early reports, this is one of the best openings we have had in years. Most of the fishermen we talked to were hauling in really good numbers of 30-40-count brown shrimp, and it should only get better as night falls."

"Hopefully, today is a snapshot of the rest of the season, and these fishermen can continue to do well the rest of the year."

MDMR's aerial survey showed most of the fleet was located from the Biloxi East channel to Bellefontaine Beach (155) and from the Gulfport ship channel to Deer Island (120). A smaller number of boats (65) were working the west side of the Gulfport ship channel.

The Marine Patrol Office was out on the water at 4 a.m. Wednesday with 10 boats and 25 officers helping to check licenses and look for any violations. There were three violations Wednesday.

Early harvest reports showed fishermen hauling in 300-plus pounds per trawl of 30-40-count brown shrimp. The size was slightly smaller west of the Gulfport ship channel with 40-50-count brown shrimp, but the number of pounds were the same as in other areas.

MDMR sold 729 shrimp licenses since April 1, 2014. Of those, 359 were resident commercial; 256 were non-resident commercial and 114 were recreational.

Photos courtesy Mississippi Department of Marine Resources

- 1. Boats filled the Mississippi Sound on the opening day of shrimp season Wednesday, June 18, 2014. This aerial view shows a few of the boats eager to catch shrimp.**
- 2. About 368 boats were in the Mississippi Sound Wednesday, June 18, 2014, for the opening of shrimp season.**
- 3. A shrimp boat lowers its trawls on the first day of the season Wednesday, June 18, 2014.**
- 4. A shrimp boat in the pre-dawn hours waits for the sun to rise to begin catching shrimp. Shrimp season began Wednesday, June 18, 2014.**
- 5. The sunrise on Wednesday, June 18, 2014, signaled the start of shrimp season for this year.**
- 6. Shrimpers show off their catch on the first day of shrimp season on Wednesday, June 18, 2014.**
- 7. John Guidry, Jr., center, gets help from his father, John Guidry, Sr., right, and friend Ken Jackson hauling in their shrimp catch on Wednesday, June 18, 2014.**
- 8. The captain of the boat "Mr. Ben" lowers a trawl into the water on the opening day of shrimp season on Wednesday, June 18, 2014.**

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.

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