



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

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News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MDMR, GCRL release red snapper

BILOXI, Miss. – More than 2,000 red snapper were released Friday on an artificial reef south of Ship Island in order to produce more of this fish that is so popular along the Gulf Coast.

Representatives from the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources and the University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Coast Research Lab participated in the release.

The fish were spawned at USM's Thad Cochran Marine Aquaculture Center in Ocean Springs nearly three months ago as part of a research program sponsored by MDMR.

"Red snapper is an economically important reef fish that is a popular target for anglers in the northern Gulf of Mexico," said Kelly Lucas, chief scientific officer for MDMR. "Currently red snapper is under intensive management with severe restrictions on fishing. Stock enhancement, or the release of cultured juveniles, can potentially provide an additional management tool to aid in red snapper fishery management."

Employees brought the red snapper from Ocean Springs to the Biloxi Small Craft Harbor, and the fish were transferred to a holding tank on a boat. Once the boat reached the artificial reef near Ship Island, water from the Mississippi Sound was put into a tank, and scientists checked the oxygen levels and water temperature.

A hose was connected from the boat to the reef, and divers sent the fish through the hose to the reef and watched to make sure they became acclimated to their new environment.

"It gives us a chance to monitor them because we release them on natural and man-made habitats that are less than 20 miles from the Coast," said Michael Lee, who manages the hatchery at the aquaculture center for MDMR.

This group of 65-day-old fish were released on My Wife II, a boat that was sunk in 2009 to be an artificial reef and attract fish.

This was the first of three red snapper releases that will take place before the end of the year, Lee said. By the end of December, about 10,000 red snapper will be released.

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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