

NRDC and Gulf Groups Call on Federal Agencies to Improve Seafood Safety Testing Post Oil Spill

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08/18/10 — Groups Concerned that FDA and NOAA Safety Protocols Lack Transparency and Could Be Strengthened to Ensure Long-Term Public Health

- The Natural Resources Defense Council and almost two dozen Gulf Coast groups called on the

NRDC

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to strengthen the current protocols and data relied on to determine whether seafood is safe for consumption and when to re-open areas for fishing. The groups claim that over the long term, if current procedures are not improved, they may not protect communities most vulnerable to contaminated seafood. The groups specifically request that all sampling protocols and data be made publicly available online to increase transparency and improve public confidence in the monitoring program.

“With the opening of shrimping season and near-daily re-opening of fishing areas, seafood safety is a major issue right now,” said Dr. Gina Solomon, a senior scientist with the NRDC. “The government needs to show it is putting

strong safety criteria and testing standards in place to ensure that the seafood from the Gulf will be safe to eat in the months and years to come.”

The need for such testing is underscored by the huge amount of oil that remains in the Gulf. According to the government’s own assessment, as much as one half of the oil that was spilled -- the ‘dispersed’ and ‘residual’ fractions -- may still be in the environment. That’s a lot of oil, more than 100 million gallons -- the equivalent of nine *Exxon Valdez* size spills.

Letters to FDA and NOAA request that the agencies:

- ensure there is comprehensive monitoring of seafood contamination;
- ensure public disclosure of *all* seafood monitoring data and methods; and
- ensure that fishery re-opening criteria protect the most vulnerable populations including children, pregnant women, and subsistence fishing communities.

The letters, sent on the heels of the opening of shrimping season in the Gulf and the publication of a *Journal of the American Medical Association* commentary by Dr. Solomon on the health effects of the oil spill, were co-signed by the following Gulf-based community, environmental and religious groups:

Bayou Blue Presbyterian Church; Biloxi Branch NAACP; Center for Environmental and Economic Justice; Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (Dillard University); Federation of Southern Cooperatives; Gulf Restoration Network; Holy Cross Neighborhood Association; Hurricane Creekkeeper; Leadership Counts!; Louisiana Bucket Brigade; Louisiana Environmental Action Network; Lower Mississippi Riverkeeper; Lower 9th Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement & Development; Mary Queen of Vietnam Community Development



Fishing Families - Gulf of Mexico

Corporation; Mobile Baykeeper; North Gulfport Community Land Trust; Portersville Revival Group; Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services; Alabama Chapter Sierra Club Mississippi Coastal Group, Sierra Club; New Orleans Group, Sierra Club; United Church of Christ; Zion Travelers Cooperative Center.

The Natural Resources Defense Council is a national, nonprofit organization of scientists, lawyers and environmental specialists dedicated to protecting public health and the environment. Founded in 1970, NRDC has 1.3 million members and online activists, served from offices in New York, Washington, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Beijing.

Related NRDC Webpages:

[Switchboard: Health Effects of the Gulf Oil Spill: JAMA Commentary](#)

[Switchboard: Assessment of Gulf Seafood Safety Needs to Protect Vulnerable Populations](#)

Related NRDC Documents:

[NOAA letter on Gulf Seafood Safety](#)

[FDA letter on Gulf Seafood Safety](#)

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About the author:

Frances Beinecke, NRDC President: NRDC is the nation's most effective environmental action organization. We use law, science and the support of 1.2 million members and online activists to protect the planet's wildlife and wild places and to ensure a safe and healthy environment for all living things.

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