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For Immediate Release

Contact: [Deborah Long](mailto:Deborah.Long@shrimpalliance.com),
804.360.0074
[@ShrimpAlliance](https://twitter.com/ShrimpAlliance)

Shrimpers Welcome Testing of Water Column

Tarpon Springs, Fla.—The Southern Shrimp Alliance, which represents the U.S. wild-caught shrimp industry in eight states, welcomed news that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) will be testing sediment samples from the seafloor in areas near the Deepwater Horizon oil spill sources. The Southern Shrimp Alliance has been one of the first and most vocal groups to express concern to federal government agencies about the potentially harmful effects of the dispersants on the marine environment.

“The unprecedented use of dispersants, which are toxic to shrimp and young marine life, is very concerning to the Southern Shrimp Alliance,” said John Williams, Executive Director. “The widespread dumping of dispersants—more than 370,000 gallons—on the surface of the water and deep in the Gulf of Mexico near the source of the oil spill is an unprecedented and risky response that may be more damaging than the oil itself.”

The Southern Shrimp Alliance sent a letter on May 5, 2010 asking the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and NOAA to ensure that the actions taken to respond quickly and aggressively to the ongoing oil spill will not create an even greater hazard that is even more difficult to monitor and clean-up. It then raised these issues directly with NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco on a public stakeholders meeting that same day. The alliance continues to push for analysis of the delicate cost benefit analysis needed to protect and clean the environment from the ongoing oil spill.

Shortly after the Southern Shrimp Alliance outlined its concerns to NOAA and EPA officials and the media, the EPA temporarily halted BP’s use the chemical dispersant at the deepwater leakage site. However, its use resumed on May 10, 2010 for 24 hours to monitor the movement and properties of a dispersed oil plume and to determine any ecological effects associated with the plume. More analysis of the effects of this chemical dispersant in shallow and deep waters on marine life needs to be conducted before the dispersants can be considered a better alternative to other clean-up methods.

“The Southern Shrimp Alliance welcomes testing sediments in the water column as a good first step, but fear the ‘act now, check later’ approach being taken with dispersants. These chemicals relocate the oil from the shores to the water column where it will be spread by currents to vital reproductive grounds throughout the western Gulf of Mexico,” explained Williams. “The U.S. shrimp industry is doing what it can to help BP contain the oil and protect our shores from oil. But as shrimpers, we live on the sea and are fighting to preserve the delicate balance of the ocean.”

While surface currents and winds are carrying the oil spill to the east, bottom currents move in the opposite direction and may cause the dispersed oil to spread to and literally smother the western Gulf of Mexico. This may vastly expand the ecological and economic impacts of the spill as the water column spreads the toxic dispersants and oil to where large numbers of eggs and larvae of countless species of marine life and their food sources are present. Injecting the dispersant at the point of the spill at a depth of 5,000 feet guarantees the maximum adverse impacts reach critical habitat.

State and federal governments are working with U.S. fisheries to verify the safety of the seafood market using protocols that have safely protected the U.S. food market through countless hurricanes and oil spills. Seafood currently in the marketplace is safe for consumption. No fishing is occurring in areas the oil spill in either state or federal waters. Tissue samples of shrimp have been taken by both federal and state governments to create a baseline of health and quality by which shrimp stocks will be tested before waters are re-opened to fishing. Water quality is also being tested and monitored. There are shrimp grounds in unaffected areas of the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico that continue to supply the U.S. market with safe sources of wild-caught U.S. shrimp. The Southern Shrimp Alliance is cooperating with government agencies to affirm the safety of wild-caught seafood.

SSA is an alliance of the U.S. warmwater wild shrimp fishery from eight states: North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas. For more information on the SSA, please visit www.shrimpalliance.com or follow [@ShrimpAlliance](https://twitter.com/ShrimpAlliance) on Twitter.

-30-

Link to a copy of the letter at: <http://shrimpalliance.com/Press%20Releases/5-5-10%20Letter%20to%20EPA%20and%20NOAA%20on%20Dispersants.pdf>