



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
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MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Low Oxygen, Algae Cause of Fish Kill

BILOXI, Miss. – A lack of oxygen in the water and algae blooms are the main causes of a fish kill along the Coast , according to the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (MDMR) and the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ).

The fish began washing up on the beaches of Harrison and Hancock counties and on Cat Island early Monday.

The MDMR and MDEQ took samples and conducted an aerial survey in an effort to determine the cause of a widespread fish kill. The Gulf Coast Research Lab also worked with the two state agencies.

"We found widespread areas of low dissolved oxygen," said Dr. Kelly Lucas, chief scientific officer for MDMR, adding that oxygen levels are lower in warm water. "In two of the 14 sampling areas, we found high concentrations of a microscopic algae that causes blooms, also known as 'red tide.' This particular species is non-toxic; however it can clog the gills of fish."

Lucas said the MDMR is working with the GCRL to sample the gills.

The lack of oxygen in the Mississippi Sound occurs during the summer months when hot water temperatures result in areas of very low or no oxygen, and fish attempt to get to the surface for oxygen. Oxygen levels generally are lower in warm water.

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, and conserving marine interests of the state by managing all marine life, public 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.

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality safeguards the health, safety, and welfare of Mississippians by conserving and improving our environment and wise economic growth through focused research and responsible regulation.