

ESTIMATING ECONOMIC DAMAGES TO MISSISSIPPI COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL FISHING INDUSTRIES FROM HURRICANE KATRINA¹

Benedict C. Posadas, Mississippi State University, Coastal Research & Extension Center, 1815 Popp's Ferry Road, Biloxi, MS 39532, benp@ext.msstate.edu

Ruth A. Posadas, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, Seafood Technology Bureau, ruth.posadas@dmr.state.ms.us

William S. Perret, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, corky.perret@dmr.state.ms.us

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ABSTRACT. An economic assessment of the commercial and recreational fisheries was undertaken in Mississippi from November 2005 to February 2006 to determine the level of damage sustained as a result of Hurricane Katrina. This assessment was a collaborative effort arising from the federal (NOAA Fisheries) and state (MS Department of Marine Resources, DMR) government agencies' urgent and compelling need to complete damage assessments in the affected areas in as short a period as possible. An accurate assessment of the damage created by this storm was needed to ensure that federal funds are both adequate and allocated to the appropriate sectors and recipients. The Mississippi State University-Coastal Research and Extension Center (CREC) and the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Extension Program (MASGEP) accepted the task of estimating the damages brought about by the hurricane to the state's fishery resources and communities. The assessment of the impacts on the state commercial and recreational fisheries industries covered commercial seafood processors and dealers, the commercial fishing fleet, live-bait dealers, marinas, for hire charter boats, and land-based support facilities. Data were collected from survey questionnaires mailed to all resident vessels and facilities licensed in the state of Mississippi. In addition, personal interviews with fishermen and site visits of facilities were conducted in four coastal locations by DMR and CREC personnel. The results of the assessment indicated that all of the seafood processing plants, support facilities, and live-bait dealers, 86.7 percent of the commercial fleet, 60 percent of the seafood dealers, and 69 percent of the for-hire charter fleet which responded to the survey were damaged by the storm. Disaster assistance programs developed by NOAA Fisheries which were approved by Congress in 2006 were administered by DMR to participating licensed operators of commercial fishing and for-hire charter boats. It is suggested that the hazard-related decision-making processes of marine establishments and fishing community households needed to be further evaluated to improve the overall mitigation process.

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