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### **Florida and Mississippi fisheries to receive more than \$17 million in fishery disaster relief funds**

As part of the Fiscal Year 2014 federal budget, Congress approved \$75 million in fishery disaster relief funds. Today, NOAA Fisheries announced Mississippi will receive \$10,941,828 and Florida will receive \$6,316,533. The allocation comes after the Department of Commerce declared six fishery disasters in 2012 and 2013.

Two separate disasters were declared in the Southeast U.S. The first was in September 2012 for the Mississippi oyster and blue crab fisheries due to floods, and the second was declared in August 2013 for the Florida west coast oyster fishery due to excessive drought conditions. NOAA will work with the eligible states affected by the disaster to quickly allocate the funding.

“We are very concerned for those affected by these fisheries disasters,” said Roy Crabtree, southeast regional administrator for NOAA Fisheries. “We will work closely with each state to distribute funds as quickly as possible to help folks move past these challenging times.”

Funding recipients will have broad latitude to determine the best use of the funds to meet the unique needs of their local businesses and communities. Funds can be used for activities that “restore the fishery or prevent a similar failure in the future, and to assist a fishing community affected by such failure.”

There are a number of steps that have to take place before the money can be distributed. Funds are allocated through the federal grant process. NOAA Fisheries works with the recipients to develop spend plans and ensure that all statutory and grant requirements are addressed. We have determined that matching requirements do not apply to states, Councils and Commissions in this particular situation.

Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Commerce Secretary can declare a fishery disaster, which makes it possible for Congress to appropriate funds to provide economic assistance to fishing businesses and communities, including fishermen, affected by a disaster and to support other activities addressing the disaster.

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