

Names:



Brown Shrimp Investigation Student Sheet

Lesson 3 > Part 3 > Changing Ecosystems

Expert Group 1: How Opening the Spillway Impacts the Fishing Industry

Read the article on page 20 and answer the questions below.

1. What is the one main problem identified in the article? Why was the spillway opened, and what problems does this cause?

2. What are two questions that you have after reading the article?

3. Write three words that you feel sum up the message of this article (they do not have to form a sentence).

4. How does this article relate to the investigation question for today: How are brown shrimp impacted by the changing coastal environment? How does this affect the people of Louisiana?





Letters: Seafood industry hampered by spillway opening

Gulf seafood harvesters need federal disaster recovery funding to ease the suffering caused by the opening of the Bonnet Carre Spillway. The freshwater from this year's record-shattering flooding has harmed our fishing communities just as hurricanes and the BP drilling disaster have devastated our fisheries in years past.

In a letter to the U.S. secretary of commerce, Mississippi Gov. Phil Bryant stated that 70% of the Mississippi Sound's already imperiled oyster population is estimated to be dead, with the crab catch down by 35%. Shrimp season in Mississippi, which usually begins in June, will also be affected.

According to a news release from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, oyster landings have declined by 80% from the average for the year-to-date and are 89% below the average for March-April. Statewide shrimp landings declined by 36% for the month of March, and 63% for the month of April, when compared to the five-year average. Statewide blue crab landings have decreased by 33% for the month of March, and 45% for the month of April when compared to the five-year average. The opening of the Spillway is also reportedly affecting tourism.

While we support immediate mitigation and disaster relief, we also recognize the need for long-term solutions. The Bonnet Carre Spillway has now opened four times in the past four years. It will likely open with more regularity as upstream wetlands continue to be filled and climate change increases the volume of water circulating from the Gulf into rainfall events across the Mississippi River and Pearl River watersheds. The United States Army Corps of Engineers should be required to produce salinity modeling that can anticipate water quality impacts in the Mississippi Sound from these massive freshwater injections.

For 25 years, Healthy Gulf has been advocating for better water and wetlands management throughout the entire Mississippi River basin. Only by reestablishing floodplain wetlands at a large scale throughout the watershed will we be able to prevent regular catastrophic freshwater releases into the Mississippi Sound.



Workers open bays of the Bonnet Carre Spillway, to divert rising water from the Mississippi River to Lake Pontchartrain, upriver from New Orleans, in Norco, La., Friday, May 10, 2019. Torrential rains in Louisiana brought such a rapid rise on the river that the Army Corps of Engineers is opening the major spillway four days earlier than planned. Spokesman Ricky Boyett says the river rose six inches in 24 hours, with more rain expected through the weekend. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)

When the Bonnet Carre Spillway opens at this intensity, it connects the Mississippi Sound with the Mississippi River watershed. This connection brings all the problems associated with the river, including nitrogen and phosphorus pollution, microplastics, and other industrial waste from upriver states.

This is a national problem because the Mississippi River drains 41% of the continental United States. It's time for the rest of the country to step up for Gulf fishers. We need immediate federal disaster dollars for our coastal communities harmed by this year's flooding, but we also need the rest of the country to start doing its part to manage the water upriver. We're all in this together.