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***Governor's Office Releases DMR Plan for Using
Federal Fisheries Disaster Relief Funds to Help
Stabilize Mississippi Shrimp Industry***

Governor Ronnie Musgrove and the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources (DMR) have announced a plan for distributing Mississippi's portion of the Congressional Fisheries Disaster Relief Fund. The DMR reviewed input from shrimp industry representatives to set qualifying criteria and decide how the \$1,003,307 share would be disbursed.

In February 2003, Congress appropriated \$35 million in funds to aid the shrimping industry, which has been hard hit by declining prices due to the increasing amount and low price of imported shrimp and higher operating costs. Funds were allotted to states based on the volume of shrimp produced by each state. Mississippi's portion of the \$17.5 million allotted for the Gulf of Mexico states is about \$1 million.

The DMR had four public meetings, personal meetings with industry and written input from shrimp industry representatives regarding qualifying criteria and how the DMR plans on distributing these federal funds to the Mississippi shrimp industry.

The DMR will distribute:

- 2 percent of funds to fishermen with a demonstrated record of compliance with Turtle Excluder Device (TED) and Bycatch Reduction Device (BRD) regulations;
- 90 percent of funds to shrimp vessel owners, captains and fisherman; and
- 8 percent of funds to related businesses (including deckhands and net makers), shrimp marketing, and funding for TED and BRD technology transfer, including incentives for ensuring widespread and proper use of TEDs and BRDs.

The following qualifying criteria for eligibility of funds have been established:

- A valid state approved photo identification and social security number/tax identification number;
- Mississippi commercial shrimp license in 2001 and/or 2002; and

Minimum of 50 percent of income from commercial shrimp fishing or a minimum of 5,000 pounds of shrimp landed in Mississippi in 2001 and/or 2002.