

# FDA issued advisory to Gulf seafood firms

February 5 2008

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The U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued an advisory to seafood processors concerning recent illnesses linked to fish carrying the ciguatera toxin.

The toxic fish were harvested in the Gulf of Mexico, near Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary south of the Texas-Louisiana coastline.

Several recent illnesses of ciguatera fish poisoning, or CFP, have been confirmed in Washington, D.C., and St. Louis, Mo., the FDA said, and the illnesses were linked to fish caught near the marine sanctuary.

The FDA said it now considers CFP a food safety hazard that is reasonably likely to occur in grouper, snapper, and hogfish captured within 10 miles of the marine sanctuary and in amberjack, barracuda and other wide-ranging species captured within 50 miles of the sanctuary.

Seafood processors purchasing reef fish and other potentially ciguatoxic fish from fishermen are urged to reassess their current hazard analyses and update them.

The toxins that cause ciguatera cannot be destroyed by cooking or freezing, and toxic fish do not look or taste differently from non-toxic fish, the FDA said. The only way to detect CFP is through laboratory testing.

Symptoms of ciguatera poisoning include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea,

muscle pain, headache, vertigo and muscular weakness.

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