

ASSOCIATION OF NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAMS



Mobile Bay National Estuary Program • 334.431.6409 • www.mobilebaynep.com • March 2001

MOBILE BAY

The Mobile Bay Estuary is a unique body of water produced by the intersection of the rivers of Alabama and the Gulf of Mexico. The Mobile Bay drainage basin covers approximately 65 percent of the state of Alabama and includes portions of Mississippi, Georgia and Tennessee. Through the years and centuries, the role of humans and the estuary have been ever changing and interdependent.

FACTS ABOUT THE ESTUARY

- The population of the greater Mobile-Baldwin metropolitan community is approximately 530,000 people.
- The area hosts a diverse employment base with tourism, fishing, heavy industry, agriculture, shipping, and education being key sectors.
- The Mobile Bay Estuary encompasses 248,000 acres of water.
- Thirty million pounds of fish and shellfish are harvested each year worth an estimated \$47 million.
- Mobile Bay is the nation's sixth largest watershed by area and fourth largest in terms of discharge volume.
- Sport fishing contributes more than \$260 million annually to the local economy. More than 24,000 boats of 25 feet or less are registered in coastal Alabama.
- Mobile Bay is home to 49 species of mammals, 126 species of reptiles and amphibians, 337 species of fresh and saltwater fish, and 355 species of birds.

HEALTH OF THE ESTUARY

- Mobile Bay's diverse ecosystems include bay waters, barrier islands, tidal marshes, cypress swamps, bottomland hardwoods, rich coastal plain soils, and oyster reefs.
- Within the Mobile Bay area there are seven endangered ecosystems.
- Mobile Bay receives more than 42,000 tons of nitrogen each year, 86 percent from upstream sources.
- Although in 1989 150 permitted point sources of pollution still discharged around 240 million gallons of waste per day to the bay, this was a 70 percent reduction from 1970 numbers.
- The Mobile Bay watershed is experiencing biotic extinctions at a rate unmatched elsewhere in the continental United States. Almost 50 percent of all U.S. extinctions this century have occurred within the Mobile Bay watershed.
- Between the mid-1950s and late 1970s, 34 percent of the wetlands in northern Mobile Bay were lost to residential and commercial development and timber management activities.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE ESTUARY PROGRAM

- The State of Alabama acquired 47,000 acres in the Mobile Tensaw Delta.
- The Mobile Bay Estuary Program has greatly increased the community's environmental awareness of and appreciation for Mobile Bay.
- On Amnesty Day over 60 tons of household hazardous waste was collected from one county in just four hours.
- A combination of 14 federal, state, and local preservation and protection projects, including over 66,000 acres in wetland restoration are helping to reduce the bay's habitat loss rate.

Seafood Gumbo

3 lbs shrimp, or more
1 can (or fresh) crabmeat, or more
Oysters (optional)
1 onion
1 bell pepper
5 pieces garlic
1/2 cup fresh parsley
3 green onions (okra optional)
1/2 tsp cayenne pepper
1 tsp black pepper
2-1/2 tbl salt or according to taste
Roux: 1 cup flour and 1/2 cup oil

Dice and combine the onion, bell pepper, garlic, parsley, and green onions.

Heat oil. When hot, add flour and let brown lightly stirring constantly, set aside.

Boil shrimp heads, strain, and save broth for stock or use chicken broth. Add to stock all diced seasonings and then add roux and cook for one hour. Add crabmeat, cayenne pepper, black pepper, and salt and cook for another 1/2 hour. Add shrimp, wait 15 minutes and add oysters (optional). Let simmer 10 minutes.

Serve over rice.