



# Alabama seafood: fresh from the Gulf to your dinner plate



**By Captain David Walker**, a commercial fisherman from Andalusia and is the owner of the fishing vessel *June Sue*. Captain Brian Swindle is a commercial and charter fisherman from Dauphin Island and is the owner of the fishing vessel *Deliverance*.

October 30, 2017

October is National Seafood Month, and there's no better place than Alabama to enjoy fresh Gulf seafood. Whether you prefer red snapper, shrimp, flounder, oysters or blue crab, you can find it all here in the Heart of Dixie.

We are a state with abundant natural resources both on land and at sea. Millions of seafood consumers from our state and across the country depend on the hard working commercial fishermen and women of Alabama supply them with some of the best seafood the country has to offer.

Between 2010 and 2014, Alabama experienced a seafood revolution. In 2010, the Alabama Gulf Seafood harvest was 14 million pounds. Just four years later, in 2014, this number rose to 30 million pounds. Over this same time period, the number of jobs related to Alabama's commercial fishing industry increased by over 140 percent - from approximately 6,200 to over 15,000 jobs. As a result, Alabama's seafood industry saw its economic impact more than double during these years from just over \$300 million in 2010 to \$660 million in 2014. When it comes to seafood, Alabama is doing it right.

There are a number of drivers behind this success. Extensive systems of artificial reefs built by the state are increasing fish populations, while protections and recovery of oyster reefs and seagrass beds ensure the habitat exists for fish and shellfish to spawn and grow. Outreach programs through organizations such as Sea Grant educate the public on what they can do to protect the marine environments. But at the core of it all is a strong science-based fishery management process. The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) is the backbone of our federal fishery law and was reauthorized in 2006 to ensure that sustainability was the keystone to a future of healthy fisheries. The results have been clear. Since 2000 alone, the Magnuson-Stevens Act has been responsible for rebuilding 41 species. Thanks in large part to this legislation, Alabama has been able to increase its commercial landings of red snapper over 475% between 2008 and 2015.

Alabama's commercial fishermen and seafood suppliers do more than just provide the public access to their natural resources by harvesting your seafood and delivering it to your plate - we collect data to improve the science used to manage our fisheries, we spend countless hours in meetings developing fishery management strategies, and we walk the halls of Congress more than a few times every year to educate our country's leaders on the need to protect the Magnuson-Stevens Act, continue to fund additional improvements for data collection/science and promote sustainable seafood. We appreciate their willingness to work with us to find solutions to the region's fishery problems. We do this because we have an obligation to the next generation of fishermen, suppliers, and consumers to pass on something truly sustainable. We are entrusted with protecting and providing public access to Alabama's marine resources, and it's a job we take very seriously.

We hope that you take some time this month to enjoy the delicious seafood Alabama has to offer. Whether you're throwing back a dozen oysters at Half Shell or Wintzell's in Mobile, enjoying some royal reds at Docs in Orange Beach, or relishing a snapper throat at Sunset Pointe in Fairhope, please take a moment to not only savor the taste - but also think of the proactive fishermen and seafood suppliers who helped make your meal possible.

[http://www.al.com/opinion/index.ssf/2017/10/alabama\\_seafood\\_fresh\\_from\\_the.html#incart\\_river\\_index](http://www.al.com/opinion/index.ssf/2017/10/alabama_seafood_fresh_from_the.html#incart_river_index)