

Louisiana casinos win USD 205 million in April

New Orleans (AP) – Providing further evidence of increasing competition from a revived Mississippi Gulf Coast, Louisiana's state-licensed casinos saw their winnings from gamblers in April drop nearly USD 9 million from the same month last year.

The state's 12 riverboat casinos, Harrah's Entertainment Inc.'s downtown land casino in New Orleans and three slot machine casinos at race tracks took in a tad less than USD 205 million last month, compared with USD 213.9 million in April 2006, state police reported Wednesday.

The riverboats won USD 142.2 million in April, Harrah's took in USD 32.3 million and the track casinos won USD 30.4 million.

Louisiana casinos enjoyed a record take for months after Hurricane Katrina wiped out all of the Gulfport-Biloxi gambling halls. But the Louisiana pot has shrunk as more coastal gambling outlets have reopened.

Still, the Louisiana total was above the USD 189.5 million in gamblers' losses reported in the pre-Katrina month of April 2005 when there were 15 operating riverboats.

Louisiana casinos won USD 230.3 million in March 2007, but industry observers said that was likely due to the fact that March had five weekends.

The New Orleans market, which consists of two riverboats and Harrah's and is the closest Louisiana casino market to the Gulf Coast, won USD 55.7 million last month, down from USD 62.8 million last April and close to the April 2005 figure of USD 55.8 million.

The Baton Rouge market, which has two riverboats and enjoyed a surge of business from storm evacuees, took in USD 19.5 million last month, down from USD 21.7 million in April 2006, but still above the April 2005 figure of USD 18.6 million.

The Shreveport-Bossier City area, a market that has five riverboats and the Louisiana Downs track casino, won USD 69.7 million last month, up from USD 65.1 million in April 2006 and \$ 67 million in April 2005.

The Lake Charles market, with three riverboats and the Delta Downs track casino, won USD 50.9 million from gamblers in April, down from USD 55.4 million in April 2006, but up from USD 40.3 million in April 2005.

The Evangeline Downs track casino took in USD 9.1 million last month, up slightly from USD 8.9 million in April 2006. In April 2006, gamblers lost USD 7.6 million.

In March 2007, Mississippi Gulf Coast casinos won USD 118.4 million, exceeding their March 2005 figure – pre-Katrina – of USD 117.8 million. In March 2006, the handful of casinos then open won USD 63.5 million, according to the Mississippi Tax Commission.

The Louisiana figures do not include the state's three Indian reservation casinos, which are not required to report their figures to the public.

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