

SERO Protected Resources Update, Sea Turtle and TED Compliance

March 16, 2023 GMFC Shrimp AP

Prepared by Jennifer Lee, Southeast Regional Office (SERO), Protected Resources Division (PRD), with data and assistance from Matthew Walia, Office of Law Enforcement, Elizabeth Scott-Denton, Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC), Galveston Laboratory; and Canh Nguyen, SEFSC, Pascagoula Laboratory, Gear Monitoring Team.

Sea Turtle Takes Observed in Shrimp Trawls in 2022:

- In 2022, the Galveston Shrimp Observer Program observed 25 sea turtles including loggerheads (n=12), Kemp's ridleys (n=6), greens (n=4), leatherbacks (n=1), and unidentified hardshell sea turtles (2) in shrimp otter trawls. Of these, 19 were observed in the Gulf (7 off AL, 2 off FL, 2 off MS, 4 off LA, and 4 off TX) and 6 were observed in the Atlantic (4 off FL, 2 off GA). Seven were observed in main nets with TEDs and 18 were observed in try nets with no TEDs. One was described as "fresh dead" (a green); two were 2 unresponsive (a green and a loggerhead); one was "previously dead; and all the others were alive/conscious.
- As a reminder, the observer data provided here are not total takes and mortalities in Southeast shrimp fisheries. Under the 2021 Biological opinion, NOAA Fisheries must produce bycatch estimates at 5-year intervals, so our first bycatch estimates will be completed and available by the end of April 2026.

NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) 2022 TED Compliance Summary:

- There were 146 TED-related incidents in 2022.
 - OLE closed 73 of the 146 with no violations documented. These represent boardings/inspections conducted by OLE/JEA partners throughout the Southeast region where no deficiencies on a vessel's TEDs and BRDs were found.
 - Of the remaining 73 incidents:
 - OLE provided compliance assistance to 38 vessel operators who were able to fix the problem on the spot and continue fishing.
 - TED bar spacing and flap lengths exceeding the maximum lengths were most commonly observed.
 - Double cover TED flaps were also found to not be installed properly i.e. sewn shut, length exceeded.
 - Other commonly seen compliance issues included:
 - TED angles exceeding their maximum requirement,
 - Small tears in TEDs and nets
 - Improper BRD placement.
 - Sea turtle mitigation equipment missing from vessel
 - 14 summary settlement offer penalties issued
 - Most ranged from \$100-\$3000

- Involved TED bar spacing and/or flap length violations, BRDs being sewn shut and one case of a vessel conducting shrimp operations a valid permit.
- 9 Written Warnings were issued for various TED/BRD violations
- 3 incidents were transferred to another agency or closed due to lack of evidence
- The 9 remaining incidents are open.

NOAA Fisheries SEFSC Pascagoula Gear Monitoring Team (GMT) 2022 TED Evaluations Summary:

- In 2022, the GMT inspected 442 TEDs
- Violations in 2022 did not differ substantially from those documented in 2021 so only a few changes to these from recommendations:
- Common violations observed (same as 2021)
 - Bent bars causing bar spacing to exceed 4" max
 - Flap length exceeding 24"
 - Double Cover overlap exceeding 15"
 - Holes and tears in flaps (shark interactions)
- TEDs with angles exceeding 55 degrees (n=12)
- Recommendations for fleet.
 - Routinely check TED grids for bent bars and that bar spacing does not exceed 4"
 - Fleet is experiencing a lot of holes and tears to TEDs and nets from shark interactions, any patches or repairs to holes in TED flaps should be followed by a compliance check by the crew to ensure that TEDs maintain compliance. If the crew is not sure how to check their TEDs for compliance, GMT is available to train captains and crew on how to check their TEDs for compliance.
 - Check TED angles for compliance. Remember to use the non magnetic side of the angle meter for an accurate angle reading.

SERO PRD Follow-Up to November Shrimp AP Sawfish Bycatch Presentation:

- During your November AP meeting, you received a presentation on smalltooth sawfish bycatch in shrimp fisheries. You were also informed of work underway to develop a population viability analysis (PVA) for the smalltooth s sawfish.
- A PVA considers a population's response to known threats in relation to the species' biology (life history characteristics) and population dynamics. A spectrum of scenarios are assessed to determine the viability of the population under each level of stress (each scenario).
- Dr. John Carlson, SEFSC is working to finalize the PVA. When available, SERO PRD will work with the Gulf Council staff and SEFSC to set up a presentation for the Shrimp AP.