

Draft Framework Action: Modification of the Vessel Position Data Collection Program for the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Fishery



June 21, 2022

Purpose and Need Statements

- The purpose of this framework action is to transition from the expired 3G cellular electronic logbook program to a system that would maintain the Council's and NMFS' scientific ability to estimate and monitor fishing effort in the Gulf shrimp fishery while minimizing the economic burden on the industry to the maximum extent practicable.
- The need is to base conservation and management measures on the best scientific information available and to minimize bycatch to the extent practicable, as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, and minimize interactions with protected species as required by the ESA.



GMFMC Shrimp FMP Objectives

- The Gulf Council established the FMP objectives in the Original Shrimp Fishery Management Plan (1981, <https://gulfcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/Original-Shrimp-Fishery-Management-Plan.pdf>).
- 1) Optimize the yield from shrimp recruited to the fishery.
- 2) Encourage habitat protection measures to prevent undue loss of shrimp habitat.
- 3) Coordinate the development of shrimp management measures with the shrimp management programs of the several states, when feasible.
- 4) Promote consistency with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA).
- 5) Minimize the incidental capture of finfish by shrimpers, when appropriate.
- 6) Minimize conflict between shrimp and stone crab fishermen.
- 7) Minimize adverse effects of obstructions to shrimp trawling.
- 8) Provide for a statistical reporting system.



GMFMC Shrimp FMP Objectives

- Helpful to identify the FMP Objective(s) that the draft FA is working to accomplish.
- Additional Feedback from the SSC in March 2019
- Objective #6 (Minimize conflict between shrimp and stone crab fishermen.) and Objective #7 (Minimize adverse effects of obstructions to shrimp trawling.) may no longer be pertinent.
- Objective #7 may conflict with priorities on reef construction by some states.



Action 1

Modify the Method Used to Collect Vessel Position Data for the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Fishery

- Note: The types of data and amount/timing of data collection would not vary between alternatives. Consistent with current requirements, the permitted vessels selected to participate must also provide the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS): the size and number of shrimp trawls deployed for each set, and the type of bycatch reduction device and turtle excluder device used in the nets. As set forth in Amendment 13 (GMFMC 2005) and 50 C.F.R. § 622.51, compliance with these requirements and the requirement to submit vessel position data is required for permit renewal.



Action 1

Modify the Method Used to Collect Vessel Position Data for the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Fishery

- **Alternative 1:** No Action - Maintain the current method to collect vessel position data through the cellular electronic logbook (cELB) units supplied by NMFS. Prior to December 7, 2020, the owners or operators of selected vessels were responsible for the cost of cellular service necessary to transmit the data. Currently, because 3G cellular transmission is no longer possible, NMFS will collect the memory cards from the units via mail.



Action 1

Modify the Method Used to Collect Vessel Position Data for the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Fishery

- **Alternative 2:** Implement a cellular vessel monitoring system (VMS) requirement for the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) shrimp fishery. If selected by the Science and Research Director (SRD), the owner or operator of a shrimp vessel with a valid or renewable Gulf shrimp moratorium permit (SPGM) would be required to install an approved VMS unit that archives vessel position when on a fishing trip in the Gulf and automatically transmits that data via cellular service to NMFS.



Action 1

Modify the Method Used to Collect Vessel Position Data for the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Fishery

- **Alternative 3:** If selected by the SRD, the owner or operator of a shrimp vessel with a valid or renewable SPGM would be required to install an approved electronic logbook (ELB) that archives vessel position when on a fishing trip in the Gulf and automatically transmits that data via cellular service to NMFS.
- *Proposed for Alternative 3:* If selected by the SRD, the owner or operator of a shrimp vessel with a valid or renewable SPGM would be required to install an approved cELB that archives vessel position when on a fishing trip in the Gulf and automatically transmits that data to NMFS.



Action 1

Alternatives 2 and 3 - Similarities

- In comparing **Alternatives 2** and **3**, the types of data (i.e. HH:MM:SS; degrees, minutes, seconds), amount/timing of data collection, and minimum number of position fixes would not vary. Vessel position is recorded every 10 minutes (LGL Ecological Research Associates, Inc. 2009). The minimum number of position fixes will be 14,400.



Action 1

Alternatives 2 and 3 - Differences

- **Alternative 2:**
- Currently, VMS reimbursement is available nationally for the purchase cost of the units, while installation, maintenance, and communication costs are covered by vessel owners, and reimbursement is capped at \$950 for programs that only allow for the use of a cellular VMS (maximum reimbursement is under review for programs that only allow satellite VMS). Following the current national VMS regulations, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) would maintain final storage of the collected data, to which the Southeast Fisheries Science Center would have access.



Action 1

Alternatives 2 and 3 - Differences

- **Alternative 3:**
 - An approved ELB would operate in the same manner as an approved VMS, but the collected data would be transmitted to an intermediary server for processing, such as by the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission or the National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service, with the SEFSC housing the final data. OLE would retain access to this data.
 - If the national VMS type-approval process is not followed (**Alternative 3**), the SEFSC would need to develop a separate contract for shrimp-specific testing and certification as well as maintain requirements for vendors on the SEFSC shrimp program website.



Action 1

Alternatives 2 and 3 - Differences

- Under **Alternative 2**, as part of its review, NMFS OLE **may perform** field tests and at-sea trials that involve demonstrating every aspect of EMTU/EMTU-C and communications operation. These field tests and at-sea trials would not be mandatory under **Alternative 2**, but would be under **Alternative 3**. As part of the review for approval of devices under **Alternative 3**, NMFS **will perform** at-sea trials aboard an offshore commercial shrimp vessel (i.e., in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico) that involve demonstrating functionality of every aspect of the hardware/software device, cellular mobile communications service, or bundle operation.
- (Highlights are added for emphasis.)



Questions?

