



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Bulletin

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NOAA Fisheries Seeks Help to Modernize Shrimp Data Collection in the Gulf of Mexico

Key Message:

NOAA Fisheries and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission are encouraging the early adoption of a new monitoring system to modernize shrimp effort data collection.

The new system works toward greatly increasing the quality and efficiency of data collection related to the Gulf of Mexico shrimp fleet, and reducing the burden of this data collection on the shrimping industry. The program is seeking a limited number of volunteers to adopt these new devices at no cost through September 30, 2024.

Overview and Benefits of the New System:

- The new system involves installation of cellular Vessel Monitoring System units on board federally-permitted shrimp vessels in the Gulf of Mexico shrimp fleet. The new devices will transmit data directly to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center via cellular networks. This will allow scientists to estimate shrimping effort more accurately and efficiently.
- The new devices can also provide direct benefits to the shrimping industry. Depending on the device installed, shrimp vessel owners can choose to access applications that allow them to observe the position of their vessel(s) in near real-time when in cellular range, and save them for later comparison.

Data Collected from the Devices

- The new devices record time-stamped vessel position in order to determine how much time is spent towing nets versus steaming to fishing grounds, which is converted to an estimate of effort (tow days). These effort data are used directly in stock assessments to better manage shrimp and other fisheries.

- Position information helps scientists identify important shrimping grounds that need to be taken into consideration in marine spatial planning. Scientists and managers use this process to determine where certain activities may take place such as deploying artificial reefs, or developing aquaculture and offshore wind infrastructure.

How to Sign Up:

The new devices are now available at no cost for a limited number of participants. The program will cover the cost for a limited number of the new units, installation and maintenance, and two years of cellular service for the device. The program is seeking volunteers through September 30, 2024. Support through the early adopter program is available on a first come, first serve basis.

The Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission has contracted with LGL Ecological Research Associates, Inc. to coordinate the early adopter phase of this effort modernization project.

Early adopters must possess a federally permitted shrimp vessel. Interested parties should contact LGL Ecological Research Associates:

Nathan Putman

Email: nputman@lgl.com

Cell: 205-218-5276

Office: 979-846-7000

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Why is this change occurring?

Shrimp effort data was historically logged through a cellular electronic logbook system that transmitted position and vessel speed data using a 3G cellular network to NOAA Fisheries' scientists. Since 3G cellular technology was shut down in December 2020, shrimpers have been physically sending memory cards to NOAA Fisheries for data retrieval.

How did this come about?

The funds for this program were appropriated by Congress for NOAA Fisheries. With this funding, we worked with the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission and LGL Ecological Research Associates to test multiple devices on five federally permitted commercial shrimp vessels in Palacios, Texas. Results indicated that the new devices collected data as reliably as the existing ones, and successfully transmitted data to NOAA Fisheries.

What are the upgrades/differences between the new and existing systems?

The new and existing devices collect the same data. The new system will automatically transmit the data to NOAA Fisheries. This is an improvement upon the current process, which requires vessel owners to manually remove memory cards from their device and mail them to NOAA Fisheries for data retrieval. Volunteers for the early adopter program will have a choice among multiple devices, some of which allow vessel owners to see and save their vessel position using the vendors' applications.

Do shrimping vessels need to have both devices installed on board?

It is not necessary to have an electronic logbook to volunteer for a new device. Early adopters must possess a federally permitted shrimp vessel. Shrimping vessels with an existing electronic logbook will need to maintain the old system for compliance purposes, but participating in this early adopter program is encouraged as this will allow comparisons between the old and new systems.

What will the new cVMS systems cost for non-early adopters?

Standard expenses for systems vary. The cost for the new device, including fees for installation and transmission, could cost upwards of \$3,000. There is also an annual cellular service charge. For shrimpers that sign up for this early adopter program, costs for the new device, installation and maintenance, and 2 years of cellular service will be covered through LGL Ecological Research Associates.

When will other shrimp vessels (non-early adopters) be required to install these new units?

At this stage, no requirements are in place for use of the new cVMS devices in the Gulf of Mexico federal shrimp fishery. Shrimp vessel owners should stay up to date on any changes to federal shrimping regulations through mail notifications and Fishery Bulletins.

I'm a shrimp vessel owner/operator. Why would I want to participate?

By participating, you will help NOAA Fisheries maintain the sustainability of the Gulf shrimp fishery and important shrimping grounds. If you choose, you can access and store the data from your vessel(s) for your own purposes and choose the device that best suits your needs. You will be able to do this at no cost to you during this early adopter program.

Where can I find more information?

You can find more information about this program in our web story, or by reaching out to the contacts listed below.

Contacts

Media Inquiries: Meaghan Emory, (786) 909-6079 (cell), meaghan.emory@noaa.gov

NOAA Shrimp Effort Data Coordinator: Alan Lowther, (305) 209-7586, alan.lowther@noaa.gov

Program Administrator: Nathan Putman, LGL Ecological Research Associates, (205) 218-5276 (cell), (979) 846-7000 (office), nputman@lgl.com

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NOAA's Text Message Alert Program allows you to receive important fishery-related alerts via text message (SMS). Standard message & data rates may apply. You may opt-out at any time.

Text alerts you may receive include:

- Immediate fishery openings and closures
- Any significant changes to fishing regulations that happen quickly

Sign up for one or more of the following groups:

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 - Text GULFRECFISH to 888777
- **Gulf of Mexico Commercial Fisheries Related Alerts**
 - Text GULFCOMMFISH to 888777
- **South Atlantic Recreational Fisheries Related Alerts**
 - Text SATLRECFISH to 888777

- **South Atlantic Commercial Fisheries Related Alerts**
 - Text SATLCOMMFISH to 888777
- **Caribbean Fisheries Related Alerts**
 - Text CARIBFISH to 888777

[Quick Glance Contact List](#) for the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office

Permits Mailbox: The Permits Office in St. Petersburg, Florida, now has a Permits mailbox in the front lobby (263 13th Ave. South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701). You can now drop off original permits for permit transfers. Envelopes with information labels will be provided so that your documents can be attached to the correct application. The mailbox will be checked daily. For more information, contact the Permits Office at 877-376-4877.

Media Contact: Allison Garrett, 727-551-5750

Recreational Fishing Coordinator: Sean Meehan, 727-385-5202