



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

Managing Fishery Resources in the U.S. Federal Waters of the Gulf of Mexico

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January 5, 2021

Dr. Clay Porch
Director of Southeast Fisheries Science Center
National Marine Fisheries Service
75 Virginia Beach Dr.
Miami, Florida 33149

Dear Dr. Porch:

As you know, in the Gulf of Mexico, effort by the shrimp fleet is currently monitored using cellular Electronic Logbooks (cELBs). The cELB program requires cost sharing between National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the shrimp fleet. At the time of its implementation in 2014, the current cELB program was considered a technological upgrade as port samplers were no longer required to board shrimp vessels to retrieve data chips from hardware on the vessels; instead, data were transferred electronically via a 3G network. This reduced costs to NMFS, and cellular costs were borne by members of the shrimp fleet that were selected to participate in the effort monitoring program (i.e., approximately 1/3 of the fleet). Effort data, generated through cELBs, along with landings data, through dealer reported state trip tickets, provide essential catch/effort information and also allow for important insight into bycatch for key species such as juvenile red snapper as well as interactions with protected species.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) was notified at its September 2020 meeting that the 3G network that cELBs use for data transmittal is being phased out at the end of the year. This has serious management implications, and the issue needs to be addressed in an expeditious manner. Toward that end, the shrimping industry has already provided funding (approximately \$330,000) to Dr. Gallaway to develop a pilot program using P-Sea WindPlot for shrimp effort data collection. At the November 30-December 1, 2020 Council meeting, Dr. Gallaway presented an overview of a pilot program that will collect the same level of shrimping effort data as the current cELBs. The Council expressed support for the development, implementation, and funding of this program, as did the Shrimp Advisory Panel at its November meeting. The Council requests that the NMFS give its fullest consideration to the development of a new shrimp effort data collection system based on the pilot program using P-Sea WindPlot technology.

Thank you for your consideration of the above request. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Matt Freeman at the Council office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas K. Frazer".

Dr. Thomas K. Frazer
Council Chair

cc: Council Members
Council Staff
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Shrimp Advisory Panel