



Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

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

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April 25, 2024

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

Dear Dr. Porch:

At its April 8-11, 2024, meeting, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) received the summary of the March 2024 Shrimp Advisory Panel meeting. Acting upon one of the Shrimp Advisory Panel's motions, the Council requests that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) adopt the following priorities for utilizing the Congressional FY24 appropriation of \$850,000 for electronic logbook (ELB) development and implementation for the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) shrimp industry:

- 1) Sufficient funding to ensure the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) server has capacity to receive and store shrimp fishery vessel position data.
- 2) Develop a statistically robust design for distributing units to a representative portion of the fleet that would sample the shrimp fleet at levels equal to or greater than the last 10 years.
- 3) Cover the cost of providing units and cellular service to those shrimp vessels, pursuant to the Early Adopter Program.

Use of these funds for these priorities would align with the Council's current development of a shrimp framework action for modification of the vessel position data collection program for the Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery and supports the existing Early Adopter Program for cellular vessel monitoring system (cVMS) units in the Gulf shrimp fishery. The SEFSC server is currently receiving transmitted data from cVMS units installed on vessels registered through the Early Adopter Program. However, the Council is concerned about the negative effect on future server operability from an expanded number of installed cVMS units. While the Early Adopter Program has been installing cVMS units on volunteer vessels, the Council recognizes that a representative portion of the fleet should be identified and used to prioritize future cVMS unit installations. This is necessary to ensure compliance with the 2021 Biological Opinion on the shrimp fisheries, which requires "that future [shrimp] fisheries effort monitoring is conducted at equivalent (or greater) levels as conducted over the past 10 years."

This is the second year of congressional funding provided to NMFS to support the Early Adopter Program. The Shrimp Advisory Panel was convened in May 2023 to provide feedback on NMFS' draft budget proposal for the Congressional FY23 appropriation of \$850,000 which required NMFS, in consultation with the Council and shrimp industry stakeholders, to continue

the development and implementation of an effort monitoring program for archiving vessel position in the Gulf shrimp fishery¹. The Council kindly requests a presentation at its August 19-22, 2024, meeting outlining the expenditures of the FY 2023 funds to date. Please let us know prior to June 3, 2024, if this presentation update is possible and if NMFS can accommodate the prioritization of the FY24 \$850,000 as outlined above.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests, and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Matthew Freeman.

Sincerely,



Mr. Kevin Anson
Council Chair

cc: Gulf Council
Council Staff
Larry Massey, Ph.D.
John Walter, Ph.D.
Andy Strelcheck
John McGovern, Ph.D.
Frank Helies
Shrimp AP

¹ The May 2023 Shrimp AP meeting summary is available at https://gulfcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/02b.-Shrimp-AP-Summary-May-2023_Final_Revised.pdf.