

Public Hearing Summary
**Modification of the Vessel Position Data Collection Program
for the Gulf Shrimp Fishery**

[Virtual Meeting](#)

March 31, 2025

Council/Staff

Chris Schieble

JD Dugas

Dr. Carrie Simmons

Dr. Matt Freeman

Emily Muehlstein

Camilla Shireman

13 Members of the public attended.

Rachel Histler – Commercial red snapper fishing family: Double Bayou, TX

She is happy to learn that the VMS data will go to NOAA's Office of Science and Technology rather than to Law Enforcement. She reiterates that it is fundamental that the privacy of shrimpers is respected, and their data is properly safeguarded and protected because it is their livelihood.

Lucy Pinelle- Shrimp vessel owner: Chauvin, LA

Her 3 boats have had cELBs since the beginning of the program. She supports Alternative 3 and has never had any issues with the cELB units. They can track vessels with the Automatic Identification System (AIS). The shrimpers in Chauvin, LA all support the cELBs. Inquired how many vessels currently report with cELBs under Alternative 1 and was looking for more info on the Early Adopter Program.

Leann Bosarge – Bosarge Boats; Shrimp Advisory Panel Chair; Pascagoula, MS

After much debate during the Shrimp Advisory Panel meeting, they settled on supporting Preferred Alternative 3, with updated units that will transmit data automatically. She worries about the funding situation for any alternative, and if worse comes to worse, she supports at least using the units the fleet already has and continuing to mail in the Secure Digital (SD) cards. National Marine Fisheries Service does have some extra cELB units in storage and will need to find a way to program them for Alternative 1, if it comes to that. She is committed to making it work to continue to provide shrimp effort data because it's important.

Christina Duong – Join on behalf of a friend in the Gulf shrimp industry.

She was attending for a friend in the industry due to a language barrier. She wants to ensure that any new program would have a strong outreach and customer service component to help people who speak different languages to install and operate the new devices.

Kyle Kimball- Vessel owner and President of the Port Aransas, TX Shrimp Association

Less than half the fleet is fishing. The expense of a new program is not going work for the industry; some shrimpers can't even pay their annual association dues of \$50. They're not making money, and they can't get crew. It's estimated that in 2019, boats were making \$56k a year but in 2023/24 it was negative \$17-19k. People will lose their permits because they can't afford to be compliant with a new program. He has boats signed up for the Early Adopter Program. He also prefers that the scientists, rather than law enforcement, take the data. The cellular towers in his area bounce off repeaters, and data from a cellular program will transmit data instantly up to 10 or 15 miles offshore. The industry is hurting, and they're doing all they can by hosting meetings and testifying in the capital of Texas to address the import problem to get the prices of domestic shrimp up. Prices are slowly increasing. He would like LGL to continue to work on this program.

Cheri Blanchard – Shrimp vessel owner; Houma, LA

Glen Delaney from the Southern Shrimp Alliance sent a letter mentioning that the shrimp industry had gotten \$1.7mil to buy new units for the fishermen. Southern Shrimp Alliance folks support Alternative 3. She would like a better understanding of the timeline for National Marine Fisheries Service to transition administration of the VMS program away from Office of Law Enforcement servers.

Written Public Comment
October 2023 – April 1, 2025

5 Members of the Public Submitted Comments

- Shrimpers can't afford requirements that are more costly to the individual.
- Data should not be transmitted to an Office of Law Enforcement server, send it to the scientists, and allow Law Enforcement access. Don't treat the shrimpers like criminals.
- No reason for the shrimpers to have their location data collected 6 times per hour.
- No other fishery is monitored as heavily as the shrimp industry, and cellular units are most feasible.
- The shrimp industry is struggling and shrinking.
- Industry buy-in will be much greater with cELBs.
- The cELBs will preserve scientific shrimp monitoring without allowing it to become a real-time enforcement tool by transmitting archived data to a non-Office of Law Enforcement server.
- National Marine Fisheries Service should provide more information on how and where VMS data will be transmitted and how it will be accessed and integrated once transferred away from the Office of Law Enforcement. This may impact the alternatives in the document and should be carefully considered by Council and the public before Final Action is taken.