



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

May 29, 2026

Mr. Jonathan Dugas
Chair
Gulf Council
4107 West Spruce Street, Suite 200
Tampa, FL 33607

Dear Mr. Dugas:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Section 609 Foreign Turtle Excluder Device (TED) Enforcement program. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) appreciates the Gulf Council's and industry's continued engagement and recognition of the use of "up to \$600,000" of NMFS appropriated funding for the implementation and enforcement of Section 609 (U.S. Public Law 101-162) for FY 2026. NMFS did not receive an increase in base funding for this directive, and is funding the program at levels similar to previous years.

This year, NMFS is directing funds to support employee salaries and travel for the Section 609 program. Completed visits this year included Panama and Mexico (both Gulf and Pacific coasts). We also tentatively plan verification visits for the remainder of this fiscal year to Gabon and Nigeria, Guatemala, and Colombia. Due to the timing of budget appropriations this year, a number of Section 609-related efforts were deferred due to the need for advance planning and funding for those efforts to be executed, such as verification visits to foreign nations, and a planned Turtle Excluder Device workshop with a candidate nation. We hope to implement some of those efforts in the future as resources allow.

NMFS remains deeply committed to supporting a robust domestic shrimp industry while ensuring the protection of endangered species. We agree that Section 609 enforcement is essential to creating a level playing field for U.S. shrimpers and providing conservation benefits to sea turtles listed under the Endangered Species Act. By ensuring that foreign nations maintain conservation measures comparable to our own, we uphold the integrity of our markets and our global conservation efforts.

We take our reporting requirements to Congress seriously and will provide a comprehensive update on these activities in our 2026 Biennial Report. We look forward to our continued collaboration with the Gulf Council to achieve these shared conservation and economic goals.

Sincerely,

Eugenio Piniero Soler
Assistant Administrator
for Fisheries

