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April 16, 2026

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 7-9, 2026, meeting, the Gulf Council (Council) received the summary of the March 2026 Shrimp Advisory Panel meeting. Acting upon one of the Shrimp Advisory Panel's (AP) motions, the Council requests that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) adopt the following priorities for utilizing the Congressional FY26 appropriation of \$850,000 for electronic logbook (ELB) development and implementation for the Gulf of America (Gulf) shrimp industry:

- 1) Ensure the NMFS server has sufficient 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 be 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 recent transmittal of a shrimp framework action for modification of the vessel position data collection program for the Gulf shrimp fishery and supports the existing Early Adopter Program for cellular ELB units in the Gulf shrimp fishery. During a presentation on the Early Adopter Program Spend Plans/Expenditures for FY23 through FY26 at the March 2026 Shrimp AP meeting, the AP was informed that cloud storage is sufficient for current data transmission, but additional storage would be needed as more devices are installed through the Early Adopter Program and additional data are transmitted.¹ Therefore, the Council is concerned about NMFS' data storage capacity with an expanded number of installed cellular ELB units. In addition, while the Early Adopter Program has been installing cellular ELB units on volunteer shrimp vessels, the Council recognizes that a representative portion of the fleet should be identified and used to prioritize future cellular ELB unit installations. This is necessary to ensure compliance with the 2021

¹ https://gulfcouncil-media.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2026/03/Shrimp-AP-Summary-March_2026_final.pdf

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.”

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Dugas", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr. Jonathan Dugas
Council Chair

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