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Southeast Fisheries Observer Program

Selection Process

Scott Leach
Observer Program Branch Chief



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AUTHORITY | Statutory Mandates & Coverage Requirements

STATUTORY AUTHORITY

- Magnuson - Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
- Marine Mammal Protection Act
- Endangered Species Act

COVERAGE REQUIREMENTS

- Atlantic Tunas Convention Act
- Highly Migratory Species Biological Opinion
- Shrimp Biological Opinion
- Fishery Management Needs

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DATA USERS | Stakeholders & Data Applications

WHO

- NOAA
- Sea Grant
- Universities
- State Agencies
- Fishery Management Councils
- Fishing Industry

WHAT

- Fishery Management
- Life History
- Bycatch Reduction
- Economic Data
- Protected Resources
- Gear Research

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VESSEL SELECTION | Process

01 Total effort selection

02 Number of vessels required

03 Create selection pool

04 Random selection

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VESSEL SELECTION | E. TX W. LA Shrimp Strata Jan - April 2026

01 Based on prior 3 years effort estimate we need 209 tow days. Applying prior 3 year non coverage rate we need to select 850 tow days. Using prior 3 years effort data we then determine W. TX E. LA shrimp strata needs 306 tow days

02 306 tow days / 18.1 average trip tow days = 16.9 vessels

03 All active SPGM permits and assign net configuration
Remove vessels without landings in strata in the prior 3 years
Remove vessels selected prior period = 75 vessels

04 SAS is used to randomly select 17 vessels stratified to ensure selection of both 2 and 4 net configurations

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COMPLIANCE | 2025 rates

Fishery	# Vessels Selected	# Vessels Covered	# Vessels Out of Compliance	% non compliant	% covered
Gulf Shrimp	140	39	62	44.3%	27.9%
Gulf Reef	245	86	41	16.7%	35.1%

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COMPLIANCE | Non compliance report

Commercial landings without meeting fishing day / set requirements

AND ANY OF THE FOLLOWING OCCURRED:

01 Failure to notify the SEFOP of an upcoming trip within 48 hours for any trip generating a commercial landing OR

02 Refusal to carry an observer for any trip generating a commercial landing OR

03 Inability to carry an observer on a trip generating a commercial landing due to USCG commercial fishing regulation deficiencies

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SHRIMP

Gulf Shrimp Coverage Goal
~2%

Active Permits
1200

Selection Pool
500

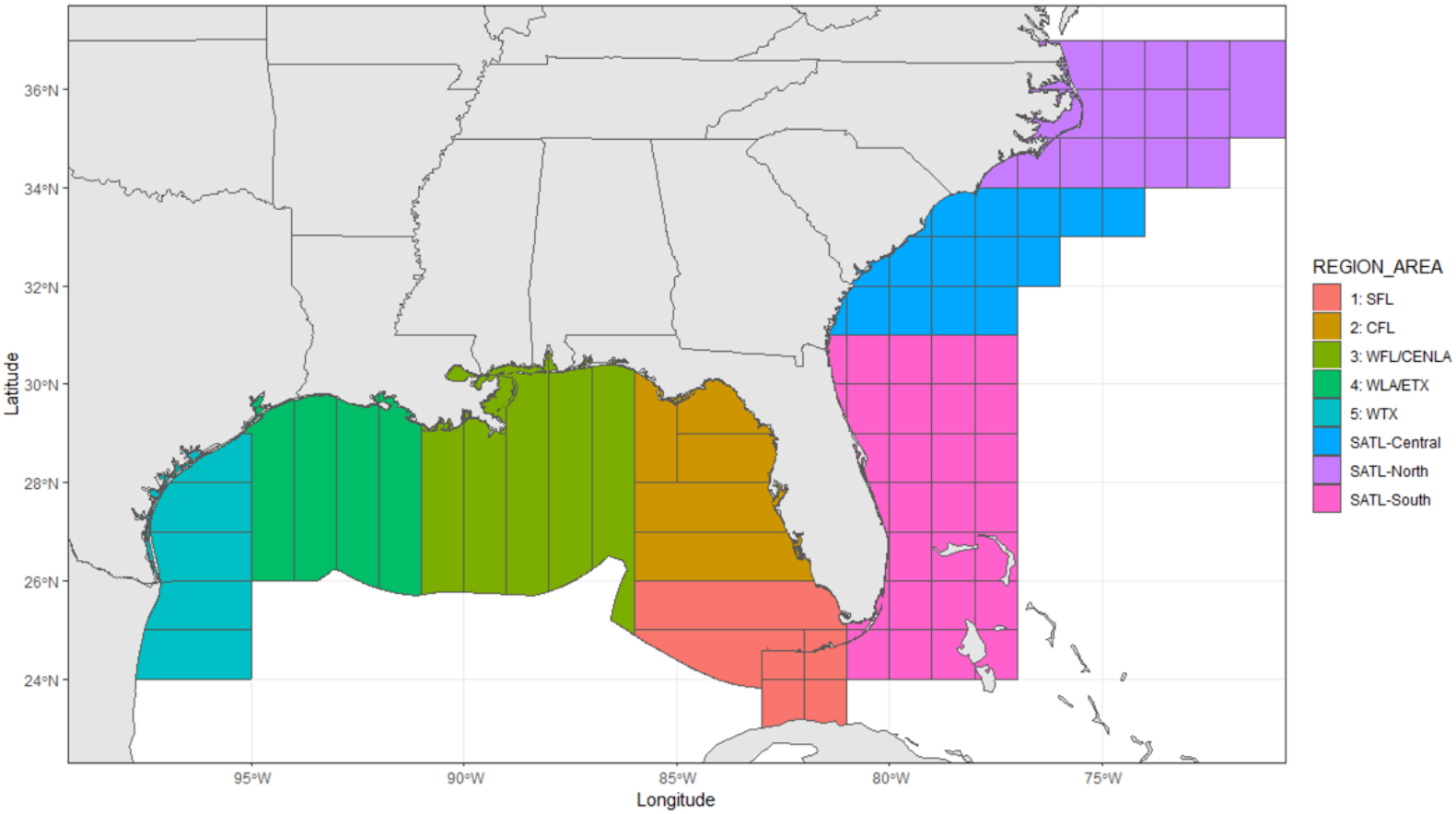
Selected 2025
140

Covered 2025
39



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SHRIMP | Selection



SHRIMP | Coverage

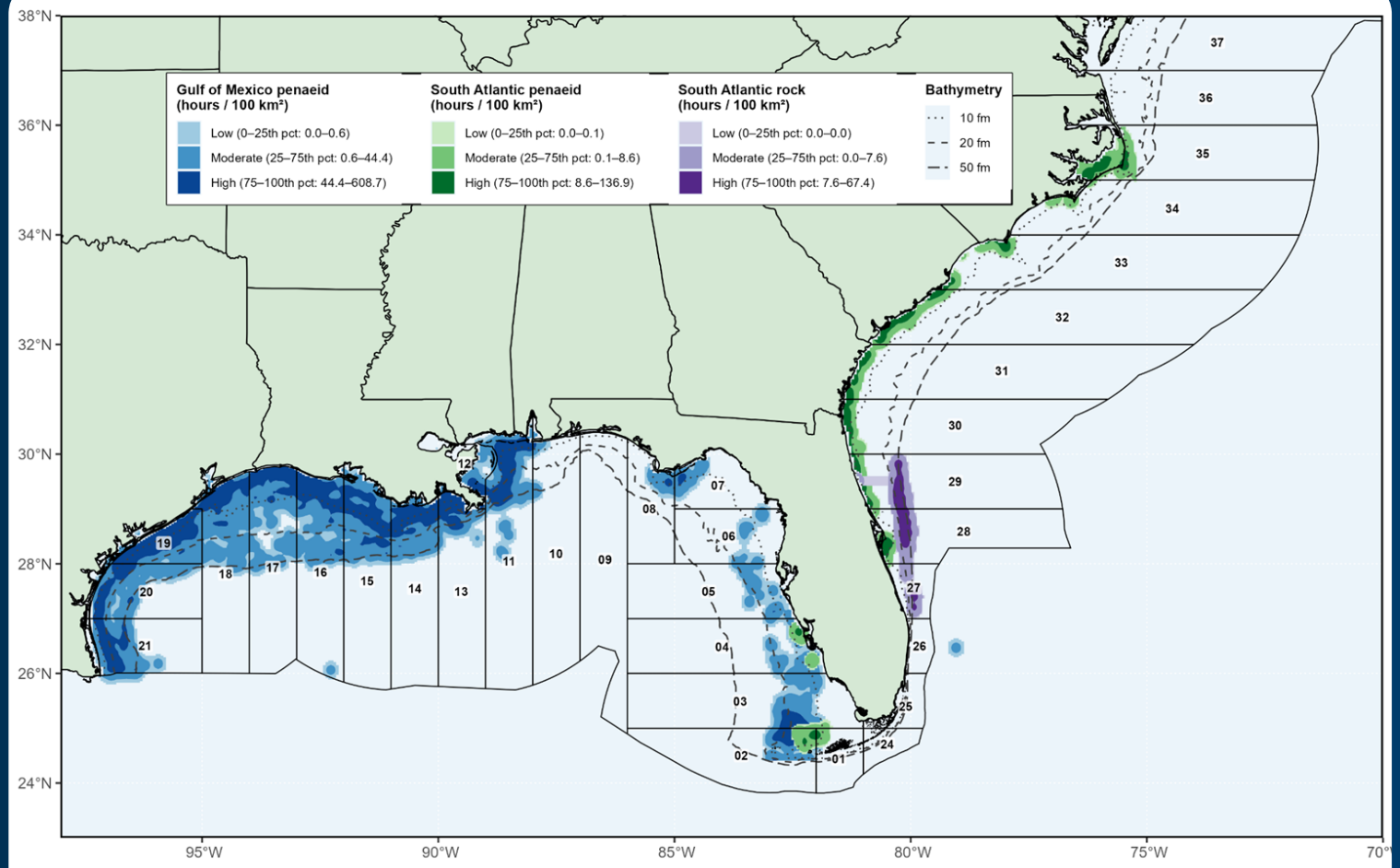


Figure 1.—Density of tow times (hours per 100 km²), based on observer coverage of the U.S. southeastern shrimp fishery from 2021–2025.

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REEF

Gulf Reef Coverage Goal

2%

Active Permits

700 – 800

Selection Pool

300 – 400

Selected 2025

245

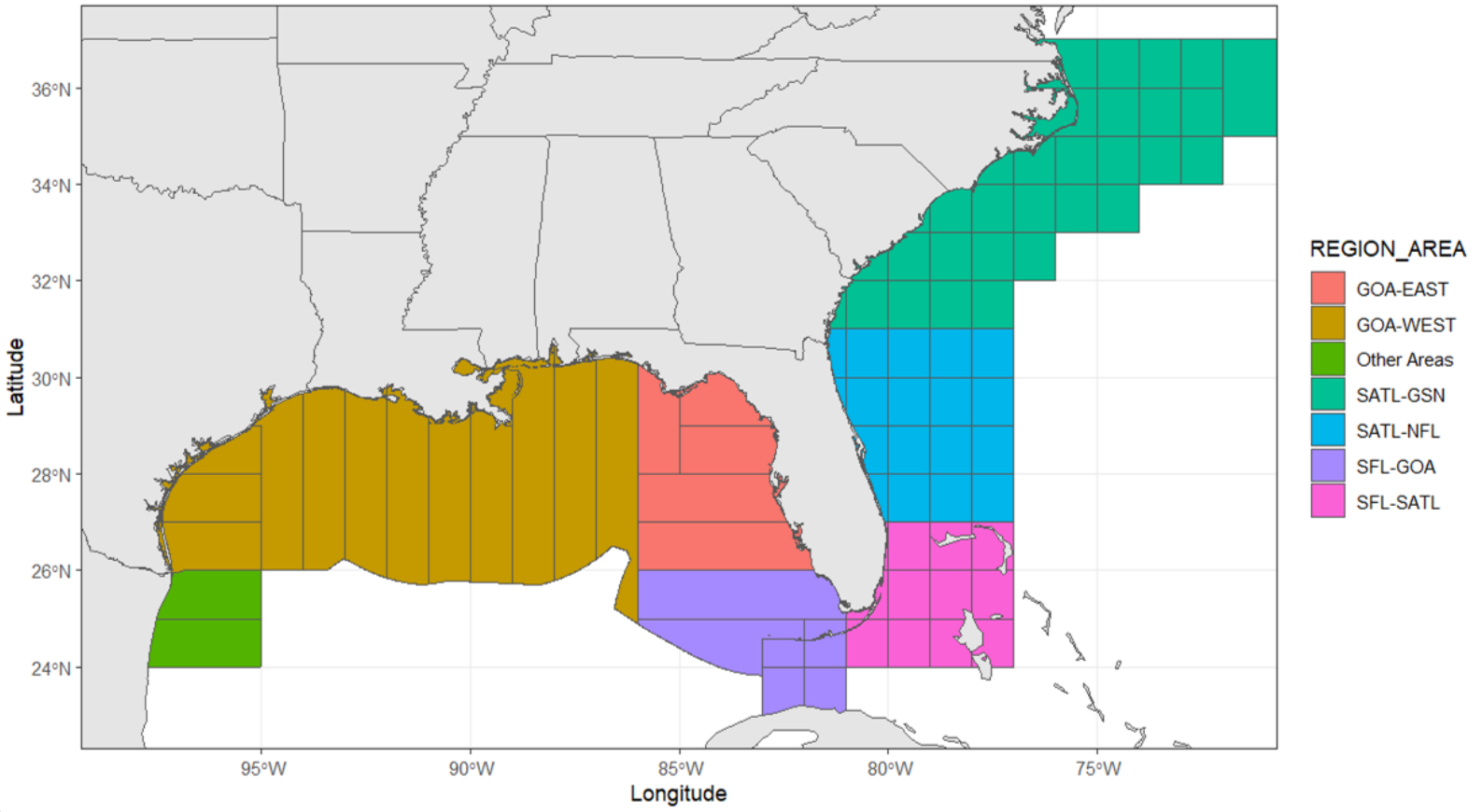
Covered 2025

86



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REEF | Selection



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REEF | Coverage

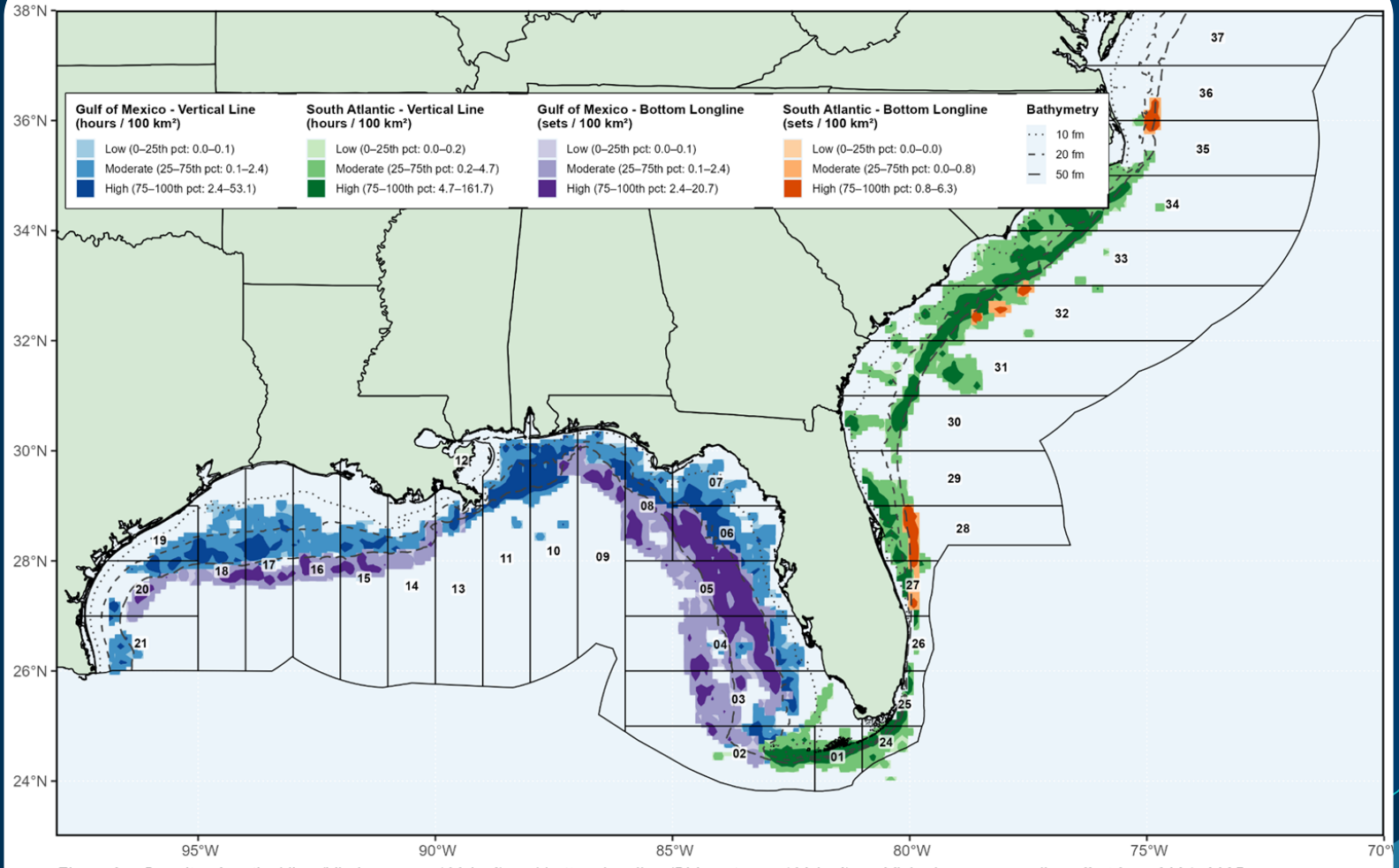


Figure 2.—Density of vertical line (VL; hours per 100 km²) and bottom longline (BLL; sets per 100 km²) reef fish observer sampling effort from 2021–2025.

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SHRIMP | Enhanced South Florida Shrimp Coverage

Selection

18 Vessels

SELECTION PERIOD

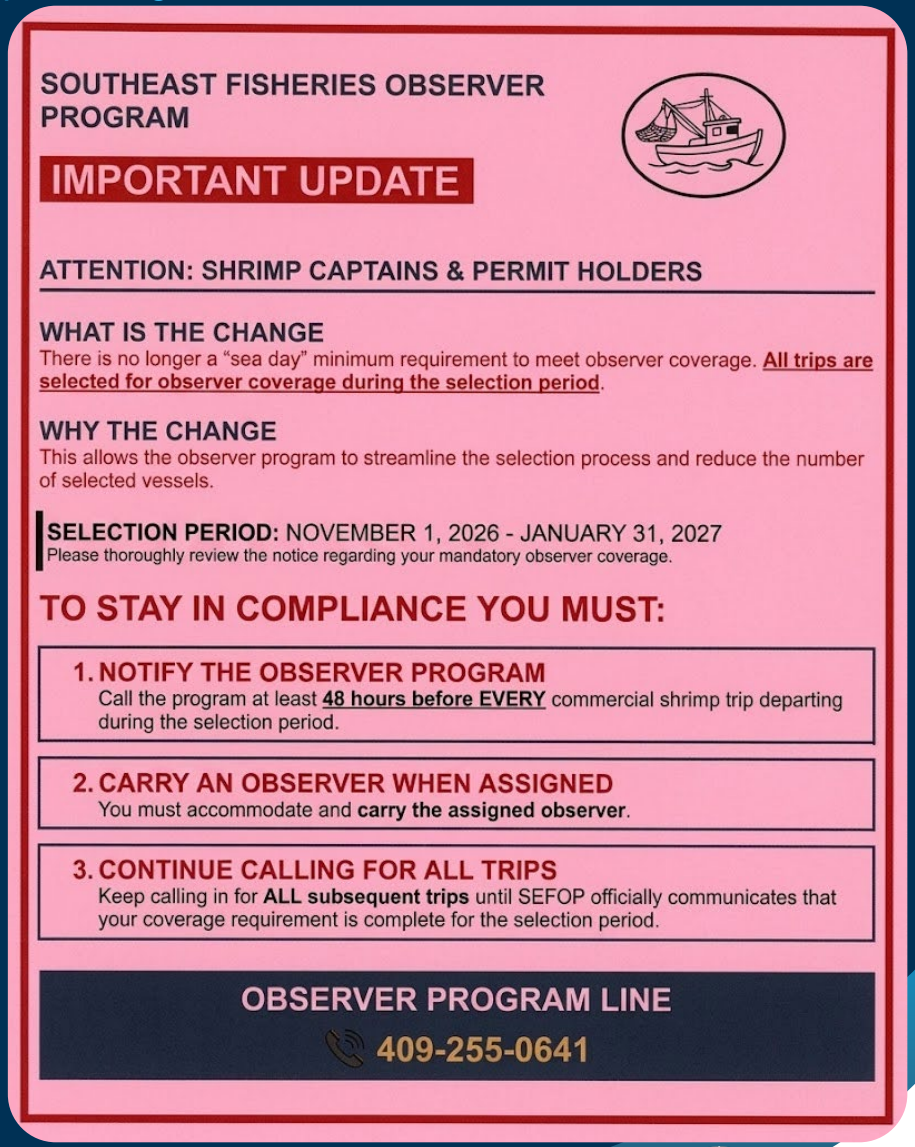
Nov – January

November 1, 2026 – January 31, 2027

REQUIREMENT

Must Notify For All Trips

48 hours prior to departing



SOUTHEAST FISHERIES OBSERVER PROGRAM

IMPORTANT UPDATE

ATTENTION: SHRIMP CAPTAINS & PERMIT HOLDERS

WHAT IS THE CHANGE

There is no longer a "sea day" minimum requirement to meet observer coverage. **All trips are selected for observer coverage during the selection period**.

WHY THE CHANGE

This allows the observer program to streamline the selection process and reduce the number of selected vessels.

SELECTION PERIOD: NOVEMBER 1, 2026 - JANUARY 31, 2027
Please thoroughly review the notice regarding your mandatory observer coverage.

TO STAY IN COMPLIANCE YOU MUST:

1. **NOTIFY THE OBSERVER PROGRAM**
   Call the program at least **48 hours before EVERY** commercial shrimp trip departing during the selection period.
2. **CARRY AN OBSERVER WHEN ASSIGNED**
   You must accommodate and **carry the assigned observer**.
3. **CONTINUE CALLING FOR ALL TRIPS**
   Keep calling in for **ALL subsequent trips** until SEFOP officially communicates that your coverage requirement is complete for the selection period.

OBSERVER PROGRAM LINE
409-255-0641

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QUESTIONS | Program Contact

Scott Leach

Branch Chief

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