Enforcement Highlights

Gulf Council Fishery Management Meeting

Galveston, TX. October 2026

Compliance Liaison Matt Walia

OLE Roles With Observer Program

- Assess referrals and appropriate response
  - Emergency/Safety
  - Fishery Related



- Coordinate responses with JEA partners/USCG



- Train Observers how to Recognize/Report Incidents

COMPLAINT TYPE	Shrimp Fishery	South Atlantic Reef Fishery	Gulf Reef Fishery	Pelagic Longline Fishery	Shark Fishery	Totals
ASSAULT						0
HARASSMENT/INTIMIDATE						0
SAMPLING INTERFERENCE	1		2	1		4
SAFETY						0
NON-COMPLIANT FOR OBSERVER COVERAGE	9	3	4	1		17
HANDLING			1	7		8
GEAR		1		1		2
RETENTION		1				1
SPATIAL		1				1
TOTALS	10	6	7	10	0	33

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Observer Refusal

Selected Vessel Notified

- Fishing Activity (under selected permit)

If Selected for Coverage

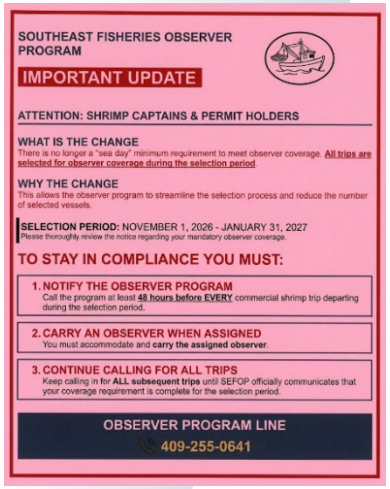
- Contact Program **BEFORE** Every Trip **(Advanced Notice)**
- Valid USCG Safety Decal
- Provide Reasonable Accommodations/Access



Outreach conducted by Southeast Fisheries Observer Program (SEFOP)

Non-Compliance Report Received from SEFOP

Not every vessel in report receives penalties



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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Compliance is the Goal

Compliance Assistance → Written Warning → SSO $ → NOVA $$

SEFOP Outreach

Vessel contact history with SEFOP- Some vs None

Interview Owner/Captain

Misunderstandings; USCG Decal

Willful Disregard

Hostility/Statements of future non-compliance

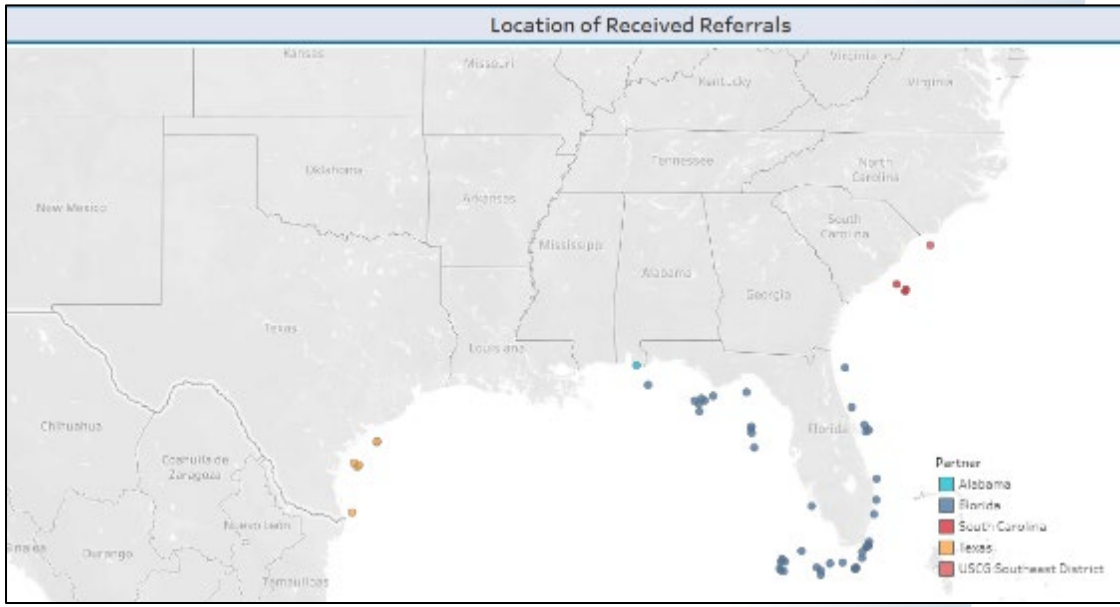
SOUTHEAST REGION SUMMARY SETTLEMENT & FIX-IT SCHEDULE

VIOLATION	VIOLATION HISTORY – PENALTY AMOUNT		
	FIRST	SECOND	THIRD
Fish Without an Observer When Required: First Violation Only	$2,500	N/A	N/A

Enforcement Referrals

GFMC Enforcement Partners





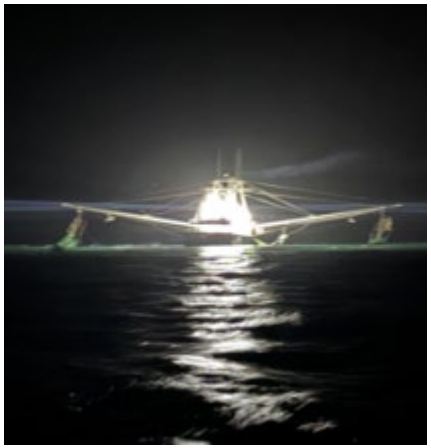
66 Overall Enforcement Referrals

(JUL-SEPT)

- Encompasses entire SED
- Within GFMC:
  - **54 FWC, 7 TPWD, 1 AMRD**

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Enforcement Partnership











International Trade Monitoring

Ports of Entry Presence

- Airport/Ports/Border Crossings

Dallas-Fort Worth Int'l Airport

- 3-day joint inspections



Seafood Fraud Case

- OLE led investigation 2022 → Criminal Prosecution 2026
- Wholesaler falsely labeled country of origin
- Gained profit from deception
- Lacey Act- $250,000 fine, 3 yr probation



REMINDERS

February 1-March 31 Recreational 20 fm boundary REMOVED

- **Effective 10/02/2026**
- **Harvest Red Grouper**
- 'Other shallow-water grouper complex' **closes January 1**
- Gag **closed through August**

Greater Amberjack Recreational

- **Closed October 14**

Be Aware of Fishing Area Requirements

- Permits
- Bag/Size Limits
- Closed Seasons

- Most Frequently Observed Violations



Law Enforcement Officer of the Year



https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/south-carolina-fisherman-convicted-falsifying-catch-records-and-lying-federal-agents

NOAA FISHERIES

Report A Violation

NOAA's Law Enforcement Hotline, available 24/7 at

(800) 853-1964

contact.nmfs.ole.sed@noaa.gov

- Location, time, and date of the activity.
- Description of the activity.
- Name(s) of the vessel, owner/operator, captain, crew, or additional witnesses.

QUESTIONS



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