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GULF COUNCIL
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February 6, 2026

Mr. Andrew Strelcheck
Regional Administrator
National Marine Fisheries Service
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33710

Dear Mr. Strelcheck:

The Gulf Council respectfully encourages NOAA Fisheries to dedicate effort and resources toward the development of a system for providing marine regulatory areas, boundaries, and associated regulations to companies that produce marine charts, mapping applications, and electronic navigation units.

At present, most commercial and consumer mapping tools rely heavily on products produced by NOAA Cartography that are navigational in nature. While these products are essential for safe navigation, they are not designed to depict regulatory boundaries and areas associated with federal fisheries. As a result, areas displayed in widely used mapping tools can be incomplete, inconsistent, or misleading when compared to legally defined fisheries management boundaries. This creates confusion for fishermen, enforcement challenges for agencies, and unnecessary compliance risk for the public.

The Council asserts that the most effective pathway to address this issue is the development of a centralized regulatory boundary service, ideally delivered through an Application Programming Interface (API) maintained by NOAA Fisheries, that can be accessed by third-party mapping and charting companies. NOAA Fisheries would need to communicate the availability, scope, and authoritative nature of this service to industry stakeholders to encourage broad adoption by companies producing marine charts, mapping applications, and electronic navigation units.

The Council understands there is proposed legislation in Congress (Modernizing Access to Our Public Oceans) that may accomplish this same request; however, the timing and outcome of this effort is unknown and further points to the need and urgency for NOAA Fisheries to prioritize enhanced regulatory mapping for stakeholders. There is a clear need for accurate, accessible, and easily obtainable fishery management boundaries and area information that is available at-sea and regularly maintained by an authoritative government source.

While the Council recognizes that regional products may be more straightforward to develop initially, we strongly encourage NOAA Fisheries to pursue this effort as a national initiative. Ideally, the system would include fisheries regulatory areas from all regions, providing a consistent, comprehensive resource for the public, industry, and enforcement partners across the United States.

The Gulf Council appreciates NOAA Fisheries' continued commitment to improving regulatory clarity, transparency, and compliance. We would welcome the opportunity to engage further on this topic and to support development efforts in any way that may be helpful.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Dugas
Council Chair

cc: Council Members / Council Staff / SERO map staff / Clay Porch, Ph.D. / John F. Walter, Ph.D. / Mara Levy