



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

006034 APR 20 12

Mr. Bob Gill
 Chairman
 Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
 2203 N. Lois Avenue
 Tampa, FL 33607

APR 19 2012

Dear Mr. Gill:

Thank you for your letter in support of the shrimp fishery electronic logbook program in the Gulf of Mexico.

The southeastern shrimp fishery continues to be one of the most valuable fisheries in the United States. Measures of the directed effort from this fishery are used to monitor the status of the shrimp stocks, and are critical to our estimates of finfish and protected species bycatch by the shrimp fleet.

Through congressionally directed funding we established a cooperative data collection effort with the shrimp industry and currently have 600 randomly selected offshore shrimp vessels and 150 inshore shrimp vessels equipped with electronic logbooks in the program. The shrimp industry, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, and all the management organizations from each of the five Gulf states fully support this critical program. It has become the most reliable and highest-quality source of fishing effort data in the Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery.

In FY 2012, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) allocated \$750,000 to keep this program operating through September 30, 2012. However, improving or even maintaining the same level of precision in the effort estimates beyond 2012 will require sharing the costs of this data collection with the shrimp industry. To this end, NMFS will work closely with the Council to establish the necessary regulations to ensure the continuation of this program.

I appreciate your concerns and the importance of the electronic logbook program to our mutual goal of a sustainable fishery and healthy Gulf of Mexico ecosystem.

Sincerely,

Samuel D. Rauch III
 Acting Assistant Administrator
 for Fisheries

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APR 24 2012

GULF FISHERIES COUNCIL

THE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR
 FOR FISHERIES

