

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING POTENTIAL NEW REQUIREMENTS OR OTHER MANAGEMENT ACTIONS APPLICABLE TO THE SOUTHEASTERN SHRIMP FISHERY

### **Who would be affected by potential new requirements in the southeastern shrimp fishery?**

Potentially all shrimp fishermen, including those that use skimmer trawls, pusher-head trawls, and wing nets (butterfly trawls).

### **What new requirements are being considered by NOAA Fisheries Service?**

NOAA Fisheries Service is considering several alternatives, including withdrawing the alternative tow time restriction at 50 CFR 223.206(d)(2)(ii)(A)(3), which would require all skimmer trawls, pusher-head trawls, and wing nets (butterfly trawls) rigged for fishing to use TEDs in their nets; time and area closures; or other measures to reduce sea turtle bycatch and mortality in the southeastern shrimp fishery.

### **Where would these potential new requirements be effective?**

Depending on the alternative selected, new requirements may apply to all vessels from Texas through North Carolina fishing in both state and federal waters.

### **Where can I find information on this proposed process?**

Information on this process and procedure/timelines for submission of public comments will be published in the *Federal Register*. We also intend to provide information and pertinent documents on the NOAA Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, website (<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/>). Additionally, *Fishery Bulletins* will be distributed to industry representatives and state agency partners.

### **When would I have an opportunity to comment on the potential new requirements?**

There will be several opportunities to comment on the proposed alternatives to reduce sea turtle bycatch and mortality:

- Five scoping meetings have been scheduled in July 2011 to solicit public input on alternatives to reduce sea turtle bycatch. The dates, times, and locations of the meetings are as follows:
  1. *Gray, LA* -- July 12, 2011, 12pm-2pm, Terrebonne Parish Public Library, North Terrebonne Branch, 4130 West Park Avenue, Gray, LA 70359.
  2. *Belle Chasse, LA* -- July 12, 2011, 6pm-8pm, Belle Chasse Community Center, 8398 Highway 23, Belle Chasse, LA 70037.
  3. *Biloxi, MS* -- July 13, 2011, 4pm-6pm, Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, 1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, MS 39530.
  4. *Bayou La Batre, AL* -- July 14, 2011, 12pm-2pm, Bayou La Batre Community Center, 12745 Padgett Switch Road, Bayou La Batre, AL 36509.

5. *Morehead City, NC* -- July 18, 2011, 2pm-4pm, Crystal Coast Civic Center, 3505 Arendell Street, Morehead City, NC 28557.

Scoping comments may also be submitted during a concurrent 45-day comment period.

- We will be publishing a draft environmental impact statement that will also have a 45-day public comment period.
- A proposed rule with information on any specific new management measures for the southeastern shrimp fishery, which we anticipate would be published by late September 2011, will have a 60-day public comment period.

**Why are new requirements in the southeastern shrimp fishery being considered?**

- Over the past two years we have documented elevated sea turtle strandings in the northern Gulf of Mexico, particularly throughout the Mississippi Sound area.
- Many skimmer trawl vessels have increased the size and amount of gear fished beyond what was originally established within the fishery, allowing them to fish in deeper water. In some cases, vessels are rigged with both skimmer trawl frames and outriggers for use with conventional otter trawl nets. As a result of these larger skimmer trawl nets, there is a possibility that a sea turtle could be captured within the mouth of the net and not visible during a cursory cod end inspection, a scenario that is compounded by the fact that many vessels fish at night.

**How would a potential new rule be implemented?**

- The rulemaking authority for any new management measure for the southeastern shrimp fishery would be pursuant to the Endangered Species Act.