



SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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David Cupka, Chairman
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March 10, 2011

Dr. Roy Crabtree
NOAA Fishery Service
Southeastern Regional Office
263 13th Avenue, Southeast
St. Petersburg, FL 33301

Dear Dr. ^{Roy} Crabtree,

On March 8, 2011, in St. Simons, GA, the South Atlantic Council approved a request from South Carolina that the EEZ adjacent to South Carolina state waters be closed to trawling for pink, brown, and white shrimp as soon as possible. Pursuant to regulations in the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the Shrimp Fishery in the South Atlantic region, the Council requests that the Secretary implement the shrimp trawling closure approved by the Council. The FMP specifies that "the Council may consider a state's request for closure of the EEZ if a drop in catch rate resulting from severe winter weather is indicated during standardized assessment sampling and reveals a reduction of 80 percent or greater of the over-wintering white shrimp abundance as reflected by CPUE."

The Council's Shrimp Review Panel met via conference call on March 2, 2011, to address the potential closure of EEZ waters adjacent to South Carolina to protect overwintering penaeid shrimp. The Panel reviewed data supporting the request (attached) and unanimously concluded that the criterion had been met, and recommended that the Council support the request from South Carolina for concurrent EEZ closure.

The FMP specifies that trawling for any species of penaeid shrimp is prohibited in the closed portion of the EEZ. Transit of the closed EEZ with less than 4-inch stretch mesh aboard while in possession of *Penaeus* species will be allowed provided that the nets are in an unfishable condition which is defined as stowed below deck. Stretched mesh size means the distance between the centers of the two opposite knots in the same mesh when pulled taut. Also, this action would establish a buffer zone extending seaward from shore 25 nautical miles, inside of which no trawling would be allowed with a net having less than 4-inch stretch mesh during an EEZ closure. Vessels trawling inside this buffer zone could not have a shrimp net aboard (i.e., a net with less than 4-inch stretch mesh) in the closed portion of the EEZ. In

addition, royal red and rock shrimp fisheries are allowed outside the buffer area; however possession of white, brown, or pink shrimp is prohibited.

The EEZ would reopen on June 7, 2011, or when South Carolina moves to reopen any or all portions of state waters, whichever comes earliest.

Thank you for implementing these closures as soon as possible. If you require any additional information, please contact Bob Mahood at the Council office.

Sincerely,



David M. Cupka
Chairman

CC: Council Members and Staff
Shrimp Review Panel
Shrimp Advisory Panel
Scientific and Statistical Committee
Bonnie Ponwith
Monica Smit-Brunello