

# **SOUTH ATLANTIC / CARIBBEAN** **ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS**

## **Significant Enforcement Activities**

### **MSFCMA**

A NOAA agent in Titusville, FL was informed by NOAA GCEL that a \$15,000 NOVA was issued to the F/V FOXY MICHELE for possessing more than two gillnets and fishing with more than one gillnet in the U.S. EEZ, a violation of the Spanish mackerel regulations.

The respondent in a king mackerel trip limit case initiated by the FWC while on a JEA patrol in Sebastian Inlet, FL, and transferred to the NOAA Titusville, FL, office reached a settlement with NOAA GCEL/SE. The respondent agreed to pay \$3,750 and to forfeit the proceeds from the sale of the seized king mackerel.

A NOAA agent in Titusville, FL was informed by GCEL/SE that a settlement was reached in an out of season and undersized lobster case involving a Bahamian national. The respondent has agreed to pay \$750. The case was initiated when a FL FWCC officer boarded a Bahamian flag M/V in Titusville and discovered illegal spiny lobster tails.

A \$30,000 NOVA was issued by NOAA GCEL to the owner of a Charleston fishing vessel based on an investigation by NOAA agents in Charleston, SC. The vessel's owner was in non-compliance with the NMFS observer requirements on at least 25 commercial fishing trips from 2006 thru 2008, and had ignored several notices from NMFS that reminded him of the observer regulations.

A NOAA agent in Morehead, NC traveled to Engelhard, NC, to serve a Notice of Permit Sanction (NOPS) on a NC Resident. The service of this NOPS had been requested from the NOAA OLE, Northeast Region for violations involving the Scallop Fishery.

A recreational fisher received a \$1000.00 NOVA from NOAA GCEL for allegedly importing undersized spiny lobster from the Bahamas. The case was investigated by A NOAA agent in Titusville, FL.

A NOAA/NMFS Agent from Charleston, SC assisted SCDNR with the apprehension of two fishermen who allegedly were gill netting shortnose sturgeon. The two fishermen were apprehended with 8 bushels of Blue Crabs harvested from a protected state sanctuary in Georgetown, SC using unmarked ghost traps on a trotline. In addition to several commercial fishing violations, the two fishermen were cited for simple possession of personal use quantities of marijuana and schedule II drugs; the fishermen received fines in excess of \$3,000 each.

A NOAA agent in Charleston, SC and SCDNR officers interviewed the lessee of the FV STARSHIP in Calabash, NC. SCDNR had previously boarded this vessel in the EEZ off South Carolina operating as a vessel for hire without any charter/headboat permits. The vessel had not been permitted to fish since July 2008. A \$1,500 Summary Settlement was issued to the lessee.

## **SOUTH ATLANTIC / CARIBBEAN** **ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS**

A HMS investigation worked by a NOAA agent in Miami, FL resulted in a \$5,280 settlement by NOAA GCEL. The investigation involved a sailfish caught aboard the charter vessel LADY K. At the time the vessel did not have a valid HMS permit, and the intent was not to keep the sailfish. However, the fish was gaffed and brought aboard the LADY K to be photographed with the fisher then released. In this case a NOVA was issued for violations of the HMS regulations for fishing for and catching sailfish without a valid permit and using improper release techniques by gaffing and bring on board a sailfish prior to release.

In a King mackerel investigation worked by a Miami Field Office NOAA Special Agent received notice from NOAA GCEL that a NOVA in the amount of \$8,000 and a 14 day Notice of Permit Sanction were issued to Maltby Watkins for exceeding the daily bag limit for King mackerel and failure to maintain fish intact. In this case Watkins made multiple commercial trips that resulted in the bag limit violation.

### **LACEY ACT**

A NOAA/NMFS agent in Charleston, SC participated in the sentencing hearing of Mark L. Harrison and Harrison International, LLC in federal district court in Atlanta, GA. Harrison was the self-proclaimed largest dealer of shark fins in the United States (claiming 80% of the national market) and had previously pleaded guilty to multiple counts of the Lacey Act, state and FDA regulations dealing with adulteration of seafood. From 2005-2007, multiple shipments of Harrison's shark fins destined for China contained fins of prohibited species. Search warrants of his facility documented additional fins from prohibited species on his FL rural property. Harrison also admitted to purchases of shark fins directly from fishermen, without the appropriate federal permit, which he also didn't report to Florida officials. During Harrison's sentencing Magistrate Judge Vineyard ordered the following sentence and terms against Harrison and his company:

- \$10,000.00 criminal fine to Mark Harrison and Harrison International, LLC,
- 4 months of home detention with electronic monitoring,
- 5 years probation during which he is completely banned from the shark industry,
- 5 years probation for corporation (Harrison International, LLC)
- Harrison is also required to publish a ½ page advertisement in a national seafood magazine, detailing what he did.



## **SOUTH ATLANTIC / CARIBBEAN** **ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS**

Agents from the Miami Field Office responded to a complaint concerning an internet auction of grouper filets. The allegations made to OLE were that the grouper filets did not meet the federal marking requirements for the packaging or have the country of origin stated. After Agents contacted the auction site the product was pulled from bidding. The complaint was also referred to FDA for additional investigation.

A NOAA agent in Titusville, FL and a Deputy US Marshal witnessed the destruction of 2,400 lbs of sea bass fillets at a cold storage facility in Miami, FL. Additionally, 9,200 lbs of undersized and mislabeled spiny lobster tails were also destroyed as the product was not fit for human consumption. These seized products were from two adjudicated criminal cases and forfeited.

A NOAA agent in Titusville, FL traveled to California and assisted SWD OLE and a DOJ paralegal specialist in an ongoing criminal Lacey Act case involving the illegal importation and false labeling of Vietnamese catfish.

NOAA agents in Titusville, FL welcomed a contingent of four Brazilian Federal Police officers regarding a joint financial crime investigation involving various US/Brazilian seafood importers/exporters. The investigative team spent the majority of their time reviewing voluminous evidentiary items including search warrant documents and seized hard drives, as well as bank account records from over 40 US shell bank accounts held by Brazilian exporters. A NOAA agent also provided the team with 5 hard drives containing 20 images of computers obtained in the US investigation. A NOAA agent prepared an update for the Brazilian team regarding the environmental crime aspects related to millions of dollars of illegal spiny lobster. The focus of the Brazilian investigation involves tax evasion, money laundering, smuggling, undersized lobster, and conspiracy. The Brazilian police indicated they would fully cooperate with NOAA OLE in apprehending two Lacey Act fugitives who have fled to Brazil to avoid a U.S. indictment. There will be amended MLAT requests forthcoming based on this visit.

### **SANCTUARY**

A NOAA/NMFS Agent from Charleston, SC attended the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Meeting on Tybee Island, Georgia. Numerous issues were discussed, including the pending ban on spearfishing, designation of a research area within the sanctuary, and the invasion of lionfish in surrounding waters.

NOAA Special Agent in the Florida Keys completed a criminal investigation where the primary defendant, David DREIFORT, received a 30-month prison sentence. From this investigation a total of six conspirators were convicted for their involvement in a scheme to place and use artificial habitat in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary to harvest lobsters in violation of State and Federal regulations. This investigation, known as Operation Freezer Burn, also resulted in forfeitures of three vehicles and three vessels, and a civil penalty of \$1.1 million. The civil penalty will be used to remove over 700 illegal artificial habitats placed in the Sanctuary.

# **SOUTH ATLANTIC / CARIBBEAN** **ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS**

## **MMPA**

At a NOAA Agent's request, FWCC personnel provided OLE with analyzed and processed information, including individual PDF maps, regarding over 129 alleged speeding incidents in the Southeast Seasonal Management Area off of Georgia and Florida and adjacent to the Right Whale critical habitat area. The incidents occurred during the 2008-2009 calving season and all vessels were documented to be speeding for more than five nautical miles.

A NOAA/NMFS Agent from Titusville, FL issued COPPS letters to the registered agents of a charter yacht and two large container ships for speeding within the Southeast U.S. seasonal management area.

A NOAA/NMFS Agent from Morehead City, NC represented NOAA OLE at the Bottlenose Dolphin Take Reduction Team (BDTRT) Meeting in Wilmington, NC. A primary concern amongst the team members was the usage of pound nets in the State of Virginia near the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. This concern was predicated on several takes of Bottlenose dolphins within the last year by this type of gear.

## **COPPS & OUTREACH**

NOAA Agents from Titusville, FL attended a charity benefit for FWCC Officer Vann Streety. The benefit was held to raise money for Officer Streety, who was shot six times during a recent vehicle stop. The incident occurred as the Officer was checking a subject in a wooded area in Cocoa, Brevard County. The FWC Officer was air-lifted to a local hospital with serious injuries. His vest stopped two shots in the back and a FWC "challenge coin" deflected another shot to his hip. He was wounded in the hand, shoulder, and hip. He is expected to make a full recovery. The subject was apprehended in Melbourne Beach 2 days later in an intensive man-hunt.

A NOAA/NMFS Agent from Titusville, FL worked with Brevard County Parks and Recreation to place dolphin feeding signs at the Jorgensen's Landing boat ramp on the Indian River in South Brevard County.

A NOAA/NMFS Agent from Charleston, SC participated in an enforcement task force coordination meeting with personnel from CBP, USFWS, APHIS, SITC and FSIS.

NOAA ASACs from Titusville and Miami participated in a Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission supervisor's meeting in Ocala, FL. It was attended by all the FWC Captains that supervise the state's covert investigative squads. It was also attended by two FL based US FWS Resident Agents-In-Charge. Specific cooperative investigations were discussed and planned. In addition, the NOAA ASACs detailed the priority NOAA OLE issues related to federal investigations in the state.

NOAA SE Agents attended a law enforcement meeting with Georgia DNR, Georgia Coastal Resources Division, USCG, NOAA GCEL, and Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary personnel. The meeting was the third annual ad-hoc JEA meeting with GADNR and NOAA OLE gave a presentation to the group, updating them on numerous investigations affecting Georgia.

## **SOUTH ATLANTIC / CARIBBEAN** **ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS**

A NOAA/NMFS Agent from Morehead City, NC attended the HMS Advisory Panel's annual meeting; wherein, he provided an OLE presentation to the AP members. The OLE PowerPoint focused on Enforcement's investigative case work during 2009, related to HMS violations. Some of the topics discussed by the AP included: closure of the shark gillnet fishery, moving BFT to the CITES list, allowing the retention of HMS species in the vicinity of Fish Attraction Devices, and establishing mandatory HMS reporting stations in the U.S. Caribbean.

A NOAA/NMFS Agent from Titusville, FL gave a presentation on Oculina Bank HAPC enforcement at the Brevard Parks - Barrier Island Sanctuary. The presentation followed a lecture by sanctuary staff about the Oculina coral habitat. The Agent also distributed South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Oculina regulations and dolphin/MMPA brochures.

A NOAA/NMFS Agent from Charleston, SC attended the SCDNR Regional meeting in Charleston, SC and briefed SCDNR personnel on ongoing NOAA OLE investigations and priorities.

A NOAA agent in Titusville, FL worked with NOAA's Charleston Forensic Lab and biologists from Massachusetts and the State of FL, to implement and develop field kits to test for the presence of stripped eggs from lobsters. Biologists in Massachusetts and Maine have developed a chemical field test for American lobsters that will identify if there is existing 'glue/cement' residue on a female lobster when the eggs are removed. Additionally, the test can determine if the lobster had been dipped in a chemical solution (bleach) to remove the eggs. Tests are being done in FL to determine if the same application will work for spiny lobsters, and if so, field kits will be assembled and distributed for use.

### **TRAINING**

A NOAA agent in Titusville, FL attended the Northeast Central Florida Maritime Law Enforcement Alliance meeting at USCG Station Ponce Inlet. Representatives from the USCG, FL FWCC, Volusia County SO and Beach Patrol, and the Port Orange, Ponce Inlet, New Smyrna Beach, and Daytona Beach PDs were present. The NOAA Agent provided a fisheries update regarding current shark and tilefish closures, right whale calving season, and dolphin feeding issues and distributed new recreational snapper-grouper regulation summaries.

Per the request of the Commanding Officer of the USCG's Southeast Regional Fisheries Training Center (SRFTC), a NOAA/NMFS Agent from Charleston, SC provided training to approximately 20 USCG boarding officers and gave a presentation on NOAA OLE investigations/techniques at the USCG's training facility in Charleston, SC.

NOAA Agents in Titusville, FL provided training to approximately 40 U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officers and Import Specialists in Jacksonville, Florida. The Agents gave an overview of OLE and federal fisheries regulations pertinent to Northeast Florida. They also gave a presentation on seafood import investigations. CBP requested the training due to officers being assigned to augment CBP Marine patrols off of Jacksonville and the fact that Jacksonville is a rapidly growing port for imported products.

# **GULF OF MEXICO** **ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS**

## **Significant Enforcement Activities**

### **MSFCMA**

NOAA Special Agents from St. Petersburg, FL responded to a telephone call from the captain of the FV BLACK JACK II after reporting he had landed in Madeira Beach, FL following the closure for deep water grouper. The agents spoke with the manager prior to interviewing the captain and monitoring the offload. The captain stated that he was having problems with the vessel and that it took him longer than it should have to get in. When he got closer to port, he had to wait offshore for several hours because of severe weather, vessel problems and his unfamiliarity with transiting the pass at night. Agents issued the captain a warning after confirming his claims.

A NOAA Special Agent from St. Petersburg, FL received notice that NOAA General Council for Enforcement and Litigation (GCEL) issued six NOVAS to vessel owners and operators targeted in a recent group II undercover operations along the Florida gulf coast. Separate undercover operations were conducted on six non-permitted Gulf of Mexico charter vessels that were allegedly operating without the required moratorium charter permits. Undercover investigators verified the non-permitted vessel operation while chartering the vessels within the Gulf of Mexico EEZ. Additional bag limit, undersize reef fish, and species specific violations were detected. Charles J. BULICX (F/V REEL ACTION), Bert BRADHAM III (F/V MOTHER OCEAN), Nicholas W. MELFI (F/V IN HOT PURSUIT), Larry J. IACOFANO (F/V WORKIN' ON IT), RICHARD W. FEATHERSTONE and Elizabeth A. FEATHERSTONE (F/V MAGIC HOOK), and Michael J. GAVALA III F/V BACALLA) were charged and received NOVAS totaling \$78,050.

A NOAA Special Agent from St. Petersburg, FL received noticed that NOAA GCEL reached a settlement agreement with the owner and operator of the F/V RACHEL J. BELLE. The case was initiated after Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) vessel track data was observed within the Pulley Ridge Habitat Area of Particular Concern (HAPC). Vessel plotter positions and logbook data obtained upon the vessel's return to port confirmed the VMS track data. The vessel captain later provided a written statement admitting to fishing within the HAPC. Richard E. WAITES and RACHEL J. BELLE INC. received a NOVA in the amount of \$30,000 and a 30 Day NOPS. The NOVA penalty amount was settled for \$8,000.

A NOAA Special Agent from St. Petersburg, FL received notice that NOAA GCEL issued a NOVA to the owner and operator of the FV NICE ONE. Ryan ROLLAND and OUTRIGGERS SPORTFISHING CHARTERS, LLC were charged with possession of commercial quantities of reef fish and possession of undersized fish. ROLLAND, the vessel operator, later admitted that he intended on offloading the reef fish to a commercially permitted vessel. The penalty included a NOVA in the amount of \$5,750 and a 30 day NOPS.

A NOAA Special Agent from St. Petersburg, FL received notice that NOAA GCEL issued a NOVA to the owner and operator of the FV EASY GOING. Brian T. Dewald and EASY GOING ENTERPRISES Inc. were charged with possessing commercial quantities of reef fish while operating a recreational fishing trip. The penalty included a NOVA in the amount of \$4,000 and Notice of Proposed Forfeiture for the seized reef fish.

A NOAA Special Agent from St. Petersburg, FL received notice that NOAA GCEL issued a NOVA to the owner and operator of the FV RESTLESS TOO. John Leyden and LAST WORD ENGINEERING Inc. were charged with landing IFQ red snapper in excess of their remaining allocation. The penalty included a NOVA in the amount of \$3,000, a 15 day NOPS and a Notice of Proposed Forfeiture for the seized red snapper.

## **GULF OF MEXICO** **ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS**

A NOAA Special Agent from Niceville, FL was notified that Violet and Brian GARRITY, owners and operators of the F/V VIOLET MARIE, received a NOVA in the amount of \$3,150. The vessel was boarded by the FWCC and found to be in possession of closed season grouper and red snapper fillets.

A NOAA ASAC from Niceville, FL and two FWC officers were deposed as part of an ongoing reef fish investigation involving a Panama City charter boat. The vessel was observed returning nonstop from the GOM EEZ by the FWC and in possession 26 red snapper over the federal recreational bag limit. A \$4,000 NOVA has been issued in the case.

A NOAA Special Agent from St. Petersburg, FL and FWCC Officers visited several local seafood dealers in response to questions regarding the current Red Snapper IFQ program, the proposed Grouper and Tilefish IFQ program, and the GOM Shrimp Observer program.

A Notice of Violation and Assessment (NOVA) was issued by GCEL in the amount of \$18,750.00 along with a Notice of Permit Sanction (NOPS) for 18 days for the shrimp vessel **KING DIAMOND III**. The vessel landed large quantities of shrimp during the time frame an observer should have been on board. The case was investigated by the NOAA Slidell, LA field office.

A Notice of Violation and Assessment (NOVA) in the amount of \$30,000.00 and a Notice of Permit Sanction (NOPS) for 30 days for the shrimp vessel **RANDY BOY** were issue by NOAA GCEL based on an investigation by the NOAA officer in Slidell, LA. The investigation showed the vessel landed large quantities of shrimp during the time frame an observer should have been on board.

An investigation by NOAA agents in Harlingen, TX which resulted in a notice of a NOVA settlement issued by NOAA GCEL to the FV DREAMCATCHER was settled for \$2,000.00. The vessel was charged with violating the reef fish observer program.

NOAA agents in Galveston, TX personally served a \$16,250 NOVA to Chad Hartman of Extreme Island Adventures. The three count NOVA include fishing without federal permits, keeping undersize fish, and failure to use proper gear.

NOAA agents in Slidell, LA received notification from GCEL that the F/V MISS LENA (case number SE0704287FM) received a Notice of Violation Assessment (NOVA) in the amount of \$18,750 and a 18-day Notice of Permit Sanction (NOPS) for failing to take a NOAA Observer aboard the pelagic long line vessel after having been selected for NOAA Observer coverage (in 2007) by the NOAA Pelagic Observer Program (POP) coordinator.

NOAA agents in Slidell, LA received notification from GCEL that the F/V MISS LENA (case number SE091196FM) received a Notice of Violation Assessment (NOVA) in the amount of \$5,000 and a 5-day notice of Permit Sanction (NOPS) for failing to take a NOAA Observer aboard the pelagic long line vessel after having been selected for NOAA Observer coverage (in 2009) by the NOAA Pelagic Observer Program (POP) coordinator.

## GULF OF MEXICO ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS

NOAA agents in Slidell, LA received notification from GCEL that the F/V MISS CAROL (case number SE0803677FM) settled a \$3,000 NOVA and 15-day NOPS for the amount of \$1,980. Crewmembers aboard the F/V MISS CAROL were boarded while trawling for shrimp in Federal (EEZ) Waters and found to be in possession of three (3) skinned cobia and approximately one hundred and thirty one (131) pounds of fish fillets. They were cited for failure to maintain intact.

NOAA agents in Slidell, LA traveled to Denham Springs, LA to serve two (2) \$17,500 NOVAs on Brian and Deanna BYERS. The couple provides charter boat fishing trips aboard the F/V OCEAN HUNTER through the STRIKE ZONE CHARTERS business name. STRIKE ZONE CHARTERS became the target of a Group II Undercover Operation when it was discovered that the vessel was advertising offshore charter boat fishing voyages on the internet and did not have a GOM Reef Fish Permit, Coastal Migratory Pelagic Permit or a Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Permit. NOAA OLE Agents, posing as paying charter boat customers, booked a trip on the OCEAN HUNTER and documented numerous fishing violations in addition to not having the required federal fishing permits. Previous attempts to mail the NOVAs to the BYERS were unsuccessful.

The F/V KEVIN DANG was issued a NOVA in the amount of \$30,000.00 for fishing without a valid GOM Shrimp Moratorium Permit by NOAA GCEL. The F/V KEVIN DANG was boarded in Federal waters while actively trawling for shrimp. During the boarding the captain was unable to produce a valid GOM Shrimp Moratorium Permit. Through the course of investigation conducted by NOAA agents in Slidell, LA it was determined that the vessel's permit had expired four months prior to the boarding and has since not been renewed. The agents also contacted shrimp docks in Mississippi and determined the vessel had landed over \$80,000.00 worth of shrimp without a permit.

NOAA agents in Galveston, TX served William Dills, owner of Saltwater Advantage Charters, a \$10,000 NOVA for chartering within the Federal EEZ without permits. Dills was cooperative and stated he intended to contact GCEL with intent to settle the matter. He also noted the vessel has since obtained the proper permits.

NOAA agents in Galveston, TX served an \$18,900 NOVA to the owner and operator of the FV BACKLASH. The five count NOVA included fishing without federal permits, keeping undersize fish, and failure to use proper gear, failure to keep fish intact, and using reef fish for bait. The owner was located in Austin, Texas. The captain was located in Port Aransas (Corpus Christi, TX).

NOAA officer in Slidell, LA received a Notice of Violation and Assessment (NOVA) in the amount of \$18,750.00 and a Notice of Permit Sanction (NOPS) for 18 days for the shrimp vessel **CAPT CHARLIE**. The vessel landed large quantities of shrimp during the time frame an observer should have been on board.

NOAA officer in Slidell, LA received a Notice of Violation and Assessment (NOVA) in the amount of \$15,000.00 for the shrimp vessel **LA BELLE ID'EE**. The vessel landed large quantities of shrimp during the time frame an observer should have been on board.



# **GULF OF MEXICO** **ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS**

## **LACEY ACT**

NOAA agents in Harlingen, TX responded to a foreign vessel intercepted by USCGC MANATEE. After Department of State approval vessel was escorted to USCG Station SPI, TX. SAs interviewed captain and crew members who admitted to trawling in the US EEZ. Owner captain and crew concurred with the violations and readily abandoned all catch onboard. FFV ROSA MARIA, a gulf shrimp vessel from Campeche was trawling for shrimp in the US EEZ. The vessel did not possess a Moratorium Federal Shrimp Permit, a violation of federal law. FFV ROSA MARIA possessed 21,964 lbs of shrimp. Bids were taken and the shrimp was sold at fair market value. The total of the catch when sold was \$10,372.00. Vessel was released and escorted by USCG to the Mexico EEZ.

## **ESA**

NOAA Special Agents from St. Petersburg, FL responded to a request for assistance from NMFS Observer Program and arranged for the removal of an observer from a Gulf of Mexico shrimp trawler. The observer was removed for personal safety issues after being confronted by the vessel captain.

A NOAA Special Agent from Niceville, FL received notice of settlement by NOAA GCEL. Timothy BRANNON and the F/V PAPA HUNKY were cited for shrimping in offshore waters with undersized TEDs. A final amount of \$750.00 was reached.

NOAA agents in Harlingen, TX received notification from GCEL of a \$6,000 NOVA issued to the F/V MISS KENNEDY for operating with a sewn TED.

NOAA agents in Galveston, TX documented a violation against the commercial shrimp vessel, LOVELY LADY. The captain of the vessel failed to utilize a proper Turtle Excluder Device in two of shrimp nets. The improper issues included long flaps, short forward cuts, and small escape openings. SA Tyer issued a \$750 fine to the captain.

NOAA agents in Galveston, TX documented a violation against the commercial shrimp vessel, MARIA N II. The captain of the vessel failed to utilize a proper Turtle Excluder Device in a port side net. The angle of the deflector bar exceeded 55 degrees. The agents issued a \$250 fine to the captain.

## **GULF OF MEXICO** **ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS**

With the assistance of SWD and other districts within SED, District IV conducted an extensive TED enforcement operation along the Louisiana and Texas coast in response to complaints of improper TED construction.

- SED Agents traveled to Grand Isle, LA, Intracoastal City, LA, and Port Arthur, TX, to participate in the TED Operation. During the operation, numerous dockside and at sea TED enforcement boarding's were conducted. A total of nineteen (19) vessels were boarded which resulted in six (6) NOVA's, two (2) Summary Settlements and four (4) Fix-it citations being issued. During the four day operation, one day was spent performing dockside boardings in Grand Isle, LA. Two days were spent performing at sea boardings with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) in Intracoastal City, LA and one day was spent performing at sea boardings with the U.S. Coast Guard in Port Arthur, TX. Violations noted were: trawling with no TEDs, trawling with TEDs with too steep a grid angle (over 55°), sewn TEDs, exit opening of insufficient dimensions and TED flaps that exceeded the 24 inch limit.
- A SED agent accompanied the USCGC SKIPJACK on a patrol out to 25 nautical miles. Numerous vessels started shrimping before the season opened. Two vessels were cited for starting to shrimp early during the Texas closure in federal waters and for TED violations.
- SED NOAA agents and CGIS worked the Galveston/Sabine Pass, TX area during the operation. SED NOAA agents requested a USCG aircraft for the operation for Intel purposes. The USCG committed a USCG 41' patrol boat in Sabine Pass. Nearly 25 vessels were boarded during three days, several summary settlements and three written warnings were issued for minor violations. For the most part, all vessels which were boarded had at least 75-100 % of their TEDS in compliance. However, a large pocket of 20+ vessels were observed fishing one hour before the season opening (which is 30 minutes after sunset). Six of these vessels were photographed, and three were boarded and documented. All in all, it was a very successful operation.

This is a photo of vessel fishing before legal time.



## **GULF OF MEXICO** **ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS**

- At the conclusion of the TED operation, the Slidell, LA office enforcement personnel and NOAA Gear Specialist Dale Stevens traveled to Cut Off, Golden Meadow and Grand Isle Louisiana to contact local shrimp trawl businesses and net shops in an effort to prevent Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDS) with incorrect grid angles, improperly sized escape openings and restricted escape flaps from being introduced into the fishery.

During the TED operation numerous incidents were recorded in which the angle of the TED grids were too steep, the escape openings were too small or the escape flaps were too restrictive. The vessel captains indicated that the TEDS had recently been purchased from local net shops and they thought their TEDS were in compliance. The names of the same net shops kept coming up so a COPPS/OUTREACH presentation was prepared and presented to the net shops so that the grid angles, escape openings and flaps could be corrected. It was discovered that part of the TED grid angle problems were caused by the use of new mesh materials that did not stretch after use as much as the previously used materials. This lack of stretch was causing TED grid angles to remain too steep after the nets were deployed. Net shop owners said that they would make adjustments to the grid angles on all new TEDS and would also assure that any TEDS that came into the shops for repair would be brought into regulatory compliance.

NOAA agents in Harlingen, TX received notice from GCEL that a NOVA issued to FV ADRIANA, a gulf shrimp vessel from Port Isabel, TX. The NOVA issued was \$8,000.00 for numerous TED violations.

NOAA agents in Harlingen, TX received notice of a NOVA settlement from GCEL for FV PRINCESS ROSITA, a gulf shrimp vessel from Port Isabel, TX. The NOVA was settled at \$9,375.00 for violating the shrimp observer program.

NOAA agents in Harlingen, TX received notice of a NOVA settlement from GCEL for FV PRINCESS ANNA, a gulf shrimp vessel from Port Isabel, TX. The NOVA was settled at \$9,375.00 for violating the shrimp observer program.

NOAA agents in Harlingen, TX responded to a foreign vessel intercepted by USCGC MANATEE. After Department of State approval vessel was escorted to USCG Station SPI, TX. SAs interviewed captain and crew members who admitted to trawling in the US EEZ. Owner captain and crew concurred with the violations and readily abandoned all catch onboard. FFV ROSA MARIA, a gulf shrimp vessel from Campeche was trawling for shrimp in the US EEZ. The vessel did not possess a Moratorium Federal Shrimp Permit, a violation of federal law. FFV ROSA MARIA possessed 21,964 lbs of shrimp. Bids were taken and the shrimp was sold at fair market value. The total of the catch when sold was \$10,372.00. Vessel was released and escorted by USCG to the Mexico EEZ.

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## **MMPA**

A NOAA Special Agent from Niceville, FL was interviewed by a reporter from the Associate Press this week in regards to a fishing trip he had taken out of Panama City, Florida. The reporter was interested in reports about dolphins stealing fish from fishermen and the investigations the Niceville office have worked in the past involving fishermen attempting to harm the dolphins. The story was picked up by several news organizations from Cape Code to Corpus Christi.

A NOAA Special Agent from Niceville, FL was notified by NOAA GCEL that a 2 count, \$12,000 NOVA was issued to Michael KREGLOW, the operator of the parasail vessel M/V TURN N BURN and P.C. Watersports. During 2008, KREGLOW were cited twice by the FWCC officers for feeding wild dolphins in the Panama City, FL area.

## **TRAINING**

A NOAA Special Agent from Niceville, FL along with members of the NOAA laboratory in Pascagoula, MS conducted TED training and boarding's with Alabama DNR officers in Dauphin Island, AL.