



September 20, 2017

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
263 13th Avenue, South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you in support of the proposal “Quantifying By-catch in Commercial Shrimp Fishery in the Northern Gulf of Mexico” submitted by Dr. Robert Leaf at University of Southern Mississippi. Audubon Nature Institute’s sustainable seafood program, Gulf United for Lasting Fisheries (G.U.L.F.) is dedicated to the sustainability of domestic Gulf of Mexico fisheries and works with industry to address their needs to demonstrate sustainability to buyers in the marketplace. Through outreach and education, third-party certification, and fishery improvement projects, we have actively supported U.S. shrimp fisheries in the Gulf since 2012.

One of the primary concerns regarding the shrimp fishery’s sustainability is bycatch, and recent pre-assessments for third-party certifications have stated that more data is needed on the characterization of bycatch in state and federal waters. As NOAA has also noted in the National Bycatch Report, it is unclear whether the current level of observer coverage used to document bycatch in the shrimp trawl fleet is statistically robust. This project will not only address a gap within the shrimp fishery, but will also generate data that may help the industry as pressures for third-party certification increase. CRP is an ideal opportunity for this research need, as industry collaboration is crucial in addressing fishery needs. We fully support the involvement of members of Mississippi Commercial Fishermen United (MSCFU) and Louisiana Shrimp Association (LSA) as industry participants in this project. G.U.L.F. has worked with both MSCFU and LSA to address sustainability concerns on the water.

In conclusion, G.U.L.F. fully support Dr. Leaf’s proposal to the Cooperative Research Program as his project will positively benefit the shrimp fishery of the Gulf of Mexico and provide valuable data about bycatch.

Sincerely,

Laura Picariello

Technical Programs Manager

Audubon Nature Institute’s G.U.L.F.