

15 August, 2016

Dr. Elizabeth Scott-Denton
Southeast Shrimp Trawl Observer Program
Galveston, TX

Dr. Scott-Denton,

We are writing to you today to introduce our organization, the US Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Supply Chain Roundtable (<http://bit.ly/1HIkIxA>). We are a group of US shrimp wholesalers who are concerned with the economic and environmental sustainability of the domestic shrimp fishery. We work with Sustainable Fisheries Partnership to maintain knowledge of the issues facing the domestic shrimp industry, and work together in a pre-competitive manner to address these issues. Last December we reached out to Jane DiCosimo, the National Observer Program Coordinator, and discussed with her some concerns and questions we have about the Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Observer Program – she suggested we reach out to you directly.

We have learned that according to *Evaluating Bycatch: A National Approach to Standardized Bycatch Monitoring Programs* (2004), the US shrimp otter trawl observer program is in the Pilot stage, while the skimmer trawl observer program is only in the Baseline stage. The *National Bycatch Report* (2011) classifies the otter trawl shrimp fishery as Tier 2 for bycatch estimates of fish, marine mammals and protected species, and the skimmer trawl fishery as Tier 1. Our concern is whether data generated by the shrimp observer program are robust enough to withstand close scientific scrutiny.

Our current questions are as follows:

1. Is the shrimp observer program included in the ongoing independent statistical review of Southeast observer program sampling designs that was mentioned in the National Bycatch Report Update 2 (February 2016)?
2. What is the aggregate coefficient of variation (CV) for Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery bycatch?
3. Is a CV precision goal for estimates of total discards (aggregated over all species) appropriate for the Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery, or are precision goals needed for some individual species or species groups due to the diversity of shrimp bycatch?
4. Do you believe there is potential for use of electronic monitoring of shrimp bycatch in lieu of human observer coverage?
5. We understand that funds have been awarded through the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Natural Resources Damage Assessment to expand the existing Shrimp Trawl Fisheries Observer Program to include additional observer days per year (as part of the Sea Turtle Early Restoration Project). Has it been determined where these days will be allocated and to which fishery (otter trawl or skimmer trawl)?

If you would like to convey a written response to our questions, please send it to Reese Antley at Wood's Fisheries (contact information below). If you would prefer to set up a conference call to discuss our questions in more detail we'd be glad to do so – please reach out to Reese Antley to arrange a time.

Respectfully,

The Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Supply Chain Roundtable

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