

April, 2017

Mr. Michael Barnette
SERO Turtle/TED Coordinator
Southeast Regional Office
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

Mr. Barnette,

We are writing to you today to introduce our organization, the US Gulf of Mexico Shrimp Supply Chain Roundtable (<http://bit.ly/2kWBmbi>). We are a group of US shrimp processors and 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. In addition, many of us have been working on fishery improvement projects (FIPs) and marine advancement plans (MAPs) to further enhance the sustainability of the Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery.

One of the main tasks of these FIPs and MAPs have been proactive gear evaluations by our vendors to ensure that TEDs are properly installed and operating at maximum efficiency. We appreciate the information that has been shared with the public on the Sea Turtle Protection and Shrimp Fisheries page of the Southeast Regional Office website. But we are extremely disappointed that the Sea Turtle Capture Rates and TED Effectiveness in the Southeast Shrimp Otter Trawl Fleet data have not been updated in over a year (most recent update was in February 2016 with data through December 2015).

As defined in the Final TED Compliance Policy, at least three sampling periods have been completed since the last update (March-June 2016, July-October 2016, and November 2016-February 2017). According to the TED Compliance Policy, within 30 days after each sampling period NOAA will review the TED inspection data to determine the corresponding TED effectiveness rate. Yet none of this information has been posted on the web.

Public availability of this information is extremely important, as it will allow us to monitor compliance and TED effectiveness and step up our pro-active gear evaluations if necessary. Closures in this fishery based on sea turtle capture rates could be catastrophic to our businesses and we are working hard to avoid such an occurrence. We formally request that NOAA post this Capture Rate and TED Effectiveness information to the Sea Turtle Protection and Shrimp Fisheries page of the Southeast Regional Office website as soon as possible.

Please convey your response to David Gautier at Captain's Fine Foods (contact information follows).

Respectfully,

(list signers here)

Cc: Dr. Roy Crabtree, David Bernhart, Robert Hoffman, Laurel Bryant