Tab A, No. 7

U.S. National Observer Program, Southeast Regional Fishery Observer Programs & Regional Electronic Technology Implementation Plans

NOAA FISHERIES
Office of Science and Technology
Silver Spring, MD

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National Observer Program

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October 7, 2015

National Observer Program (1999)

Mission

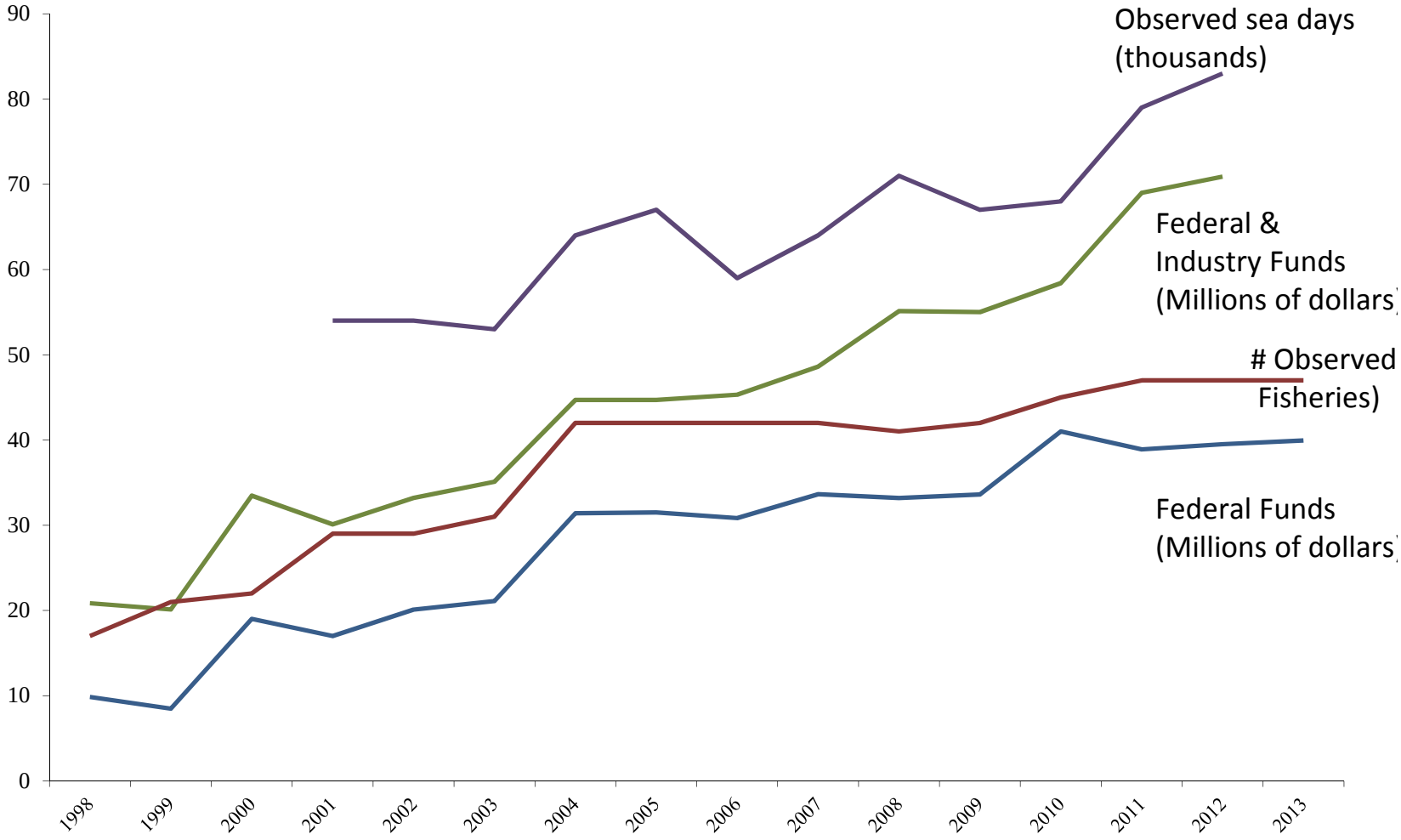
Provide a formalized mechanism for NOAA Fisheries to address observer issues of national importance and to develop policies and procedures to ensure that NOAA Fisheries observers and observer programs are fully supported. The policies must reflect the diverse needs of regional observer programs while enhancing data quality and achieving consistency in key areas of national importance.

Objectives

- **Coordinate the National Observer Program Advisory Team.**
- **Communicate and advocate the mission of the National Observer Program and each regional observer program.**
- **Develop and support national standards and policies to create high quality, cost effective, efficient, and productive observer programs.**
- **Characterize and qualify the activities and resources of NOAA Fisheries observer programs and advocate for full support**

Deploys 900 observers / 79,000 sea days / 48 fisheries

National Observer Program Budget



FY 2015 Observer Budget

($ in Thousands)	FY 2015 Available
PPA: Observers and Training:	
Atlantic Coast Observers	$3,334
East Coast Observers	$333
Hawaii Longline Observer Program	$3,775
North Pacific Observer Program	$5,566
NE Fisheries Observers	$8,226
National Observer Program	$12,305
S. Atlantic/Gulf Shrimp Observers	$1,751
West Coast Observers	$4,807
Subtotal, Observers/Training PPA	**$40,097**
PPA: Reducing Bycatch - Observers Portion Only	**$651**
Total Observers Funding	**$40,748**

FY 2015 Enacted amount for Observers and Training is $43.0 million. FY 2015 Available funding shown above include reductions for Hollings Rescission, Prior year De-obligations, and HQ administrative costs.

FY 2015 Observer Budget by Region

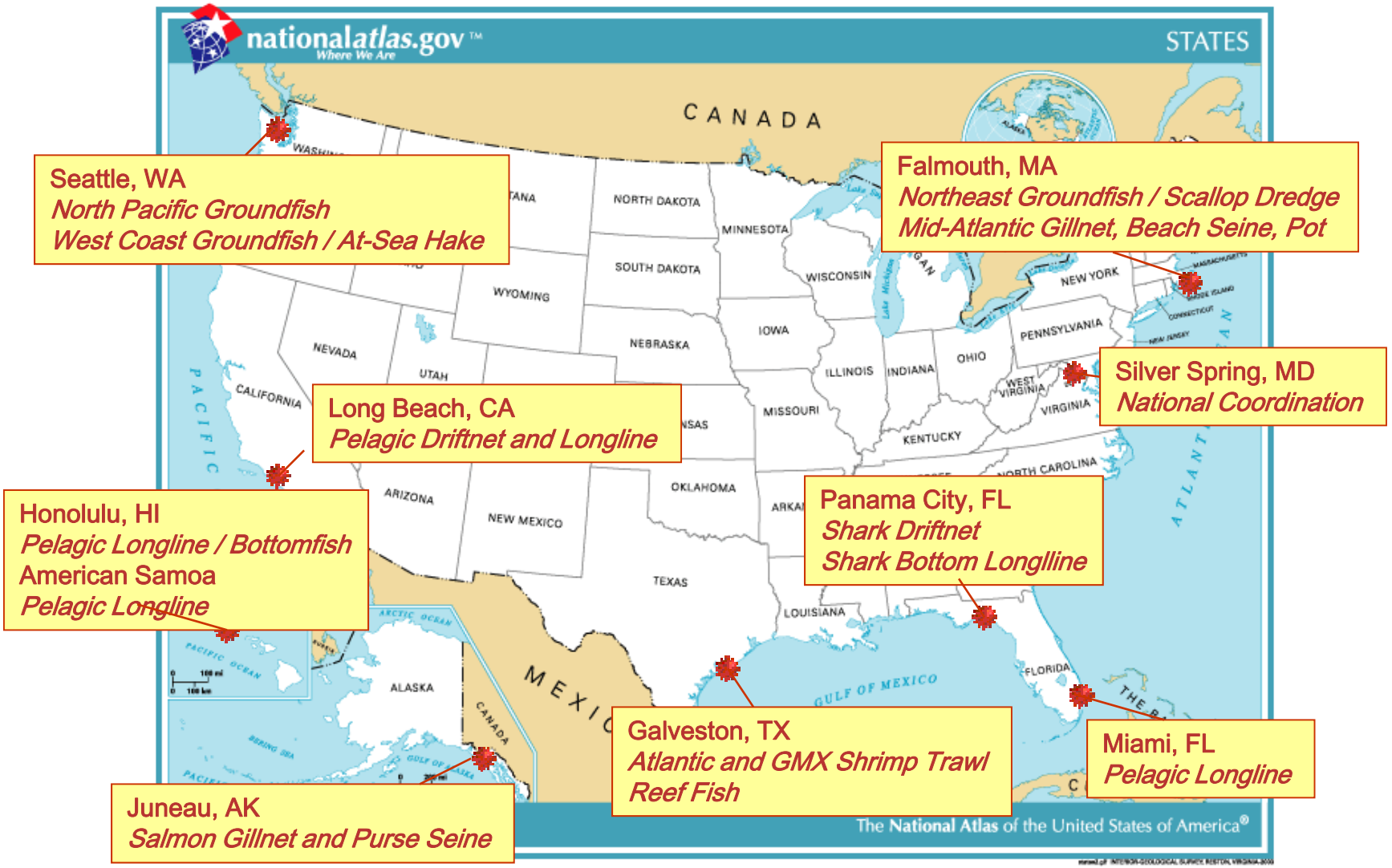
($ in Thousands)	FY 2015 Available	North East	South East	West Coast	North West	Alaska	Pacific Islands	Sci. & Tech.
PPA: Observers and Training:								
Atlantic Coast Observers	$3,334	$1,473	$1,812	$0	$0	$0	$0	$49
East Coast Observers	$333	$0	$333	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Hawaii Longline Observer Program	$3,775	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$3,775	$0
North Pacific Observer Program	$5,566	$0	$0	$0	$0	$5,566	$0	$0
NE Fisheries Observers	$8,226	$8,226	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
National Observer Program	$12,305	$5,039	$1,036	$1,039	$958	$1,556	$2,085	$592
Electronic Monitoring/Reporting	*[$900]*	*[$0]*	*[$56]*	*[$174]*	*[$200]*	*[$375]*	*[$95]*	*[$0]*
S. Atlantic/Gulf Shrimp Observers	$1,751	$0	$1,751	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
West Coast Observers	$4,807	$0	$0	$0	$4,807	$0	$0	$0
Subtotal, Observers/Training PPA	**$40,097**	**$14,738**	**$4,932**	**$1,039**	**$5,765**	**$7,122**	**$5,860**	**$641**
PPA: Reducing Bycatch - Observers Portion	**$651**	**$94**	**$94**	**$94**	**$94**	**$94**	**$94**	**$87**
TOTAL	**$40,748**	**$14,832**	**$5,026**	**$1,133**	**$5,859**	**$7,216**	**$5,954**	**$728**

FY 2015 Enacted amount for Observers and Training is $43.0 million. FY 2015 Available funding shown above include reductions for Hollings Rescission, PY De-obligations, and HQ administrative costs.

Responsibilities of Regional Observer Programs

- Sampling protocols and coverage levels
- Safety training
- Observer deployment
- Observer debriefing
- Data management
- Data analysis

Location of Regional Programs



Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico 2013 coverage

NE Groundfish Gillnet/Trawl
Coverage: approx. 8%

NE Scallop Dredge
Coverage: 5-20% based on permit type & area fished

Mid-Atlantic Large and Small Mesh Trawl
Coverage: approx. <8%

Herring Trawl (incl. Pair Trawl)
Coverage: 20%

Mid-Atlantic Coastal Gillnet/Pot/Seine
Coverage: <8%

Shrimp Otter Trawl
Coverage: 2%

Reef Fish
Coverage: 3% combined

Atlantic Pelagic Longline
Coverage: 10%

S Atlantic Shark Driftnet
Coverage: 38%

Atlantic Shark Bottom Longline
Coverage: approx. 5%

Southeast Gillnet Fishery Observer Program

Administered by SEFSC-Panama City Laboratory

- Relatively small boats: 25 – 40 ft. length
- Vessels fish North Carolina to Texas
- Trips are usually overnight
- Most vessels change species targeted and gear type frequently: sharks, mackerel, bluefish, croaker, dogfish
- Gear:
  - Drift, Strike and Sink

Southeast Gillnet Fishery Observer Program (cont.)

Goals

- Vessels are selected for coverage by randomly choosing vessels from a pool of vessels each quarter based on
  - Reported using gillnets in the same season of the previous year
  - Target coverage 8-10%
- Provide estimates of sea turtle or marine mammal interactions occurring within all gillnet fisheries in the southeast US
- Collect data on catch and bycatch of all species of fish, shark, and protected resources
  - Bioprofile samples taken on select species

Shark Bottom Longline Fishery Observer Program

Administered by SEFSC-Panama City Laboratory

- Vessels fish North Carolina to Louisiana
- Trips are 1-3 days in length
- Target large coastal sharks (e.g. blacktip, bull, sandbar sharks)
- Longline characteristics vary but gear normally consists of about 8-24 km of longline and 500-1500 hooks

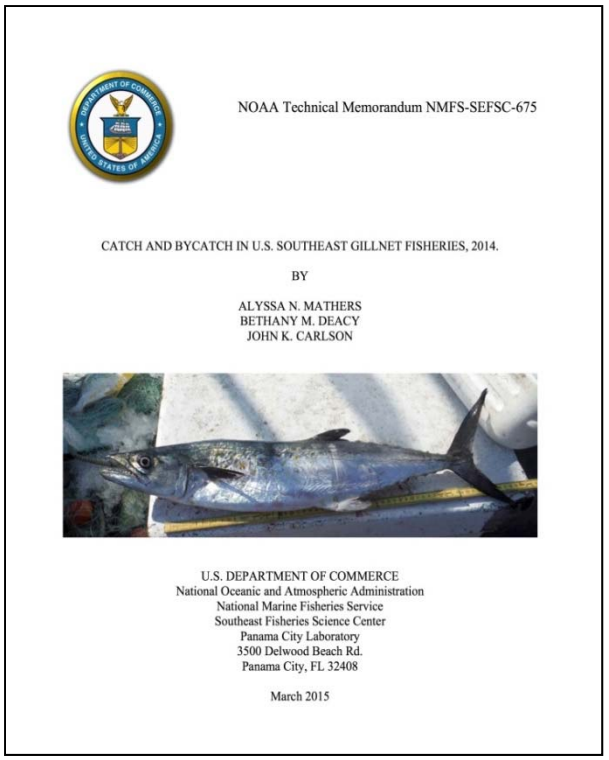
Shark Bottom Longline Fishery Observer Program (cont.)

Current Goals of Observer Program

- Vessels are selected for coverage by randomly choosing vessels from a pool of vessels each quarter based on
  - Reported using longline and target shark in the same season of the previous year
  - Target coverage 5-10%
- Shark Research Fishery– 5-10 vessels, 100% coverage, allowed to harvest sandbar shark
  - Research Fishery also functions to conduct gear modification experiments to reduce bycatch with aid of industry
- Provide estimates of sea turtle or marine mammal interactions
- Collect data on catch and bycatch of all species of shark, fish and protected resources
  - Bioprofile samples taken on select species

Shark Bottom Longline Fishery Observer Program (cont.)

Annual reports describing effort distribution, catch and bycatch available:



NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-SEFSC-675

CATCH AND BYCATCH IN U.S. SOUTHEAST GILLNET FISHERIES, 2014.

BY

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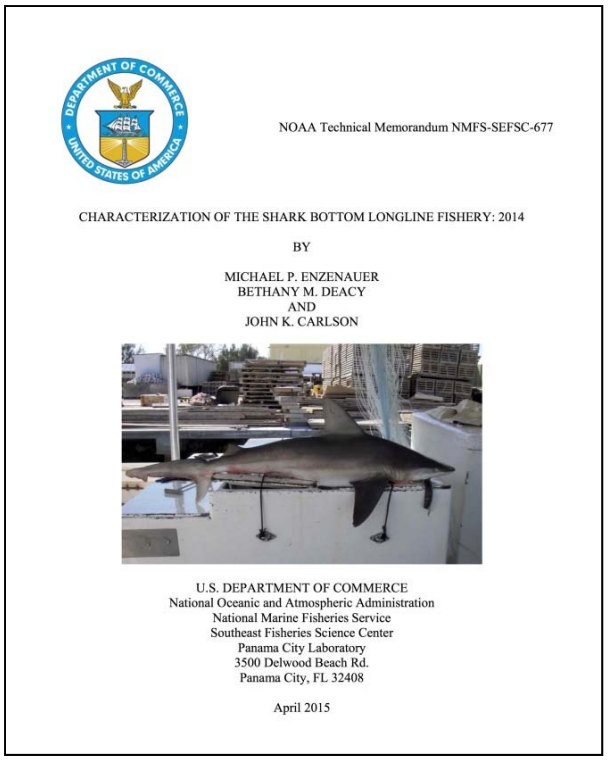

NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-SEFSC-677

CHARACTERIZATION OF THE SHARK BOTTOM LONGLINE FISHERY: 2014

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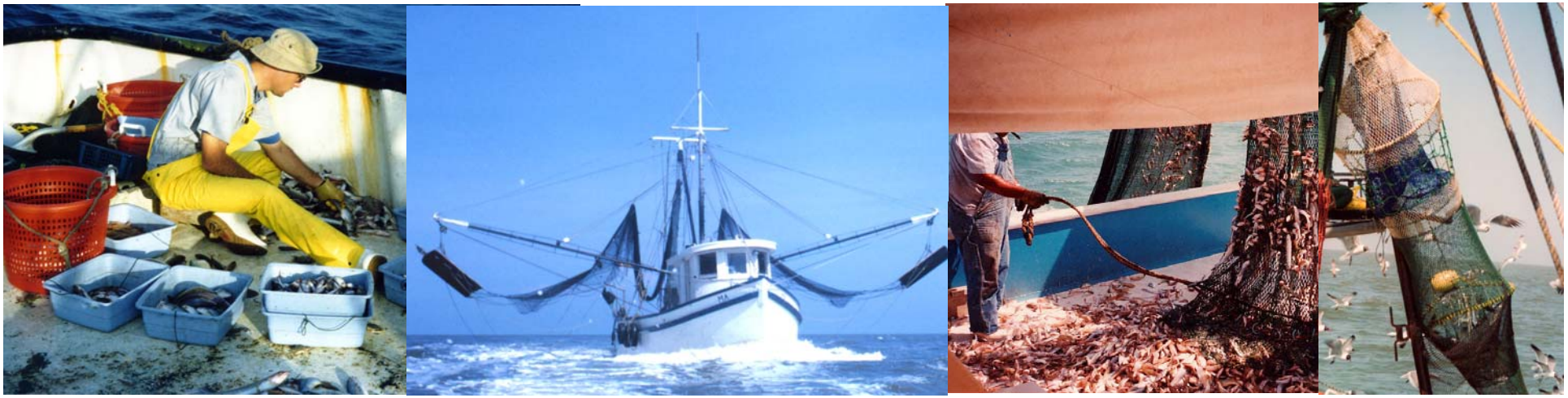
April 2015

http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/labs/panama/ob/gillnet.htm

http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/labs/panama/ob/bottomlineobserver.htm

Shrimp Trawl Bycatch Observer Program

Administered by SEFSC-Galveston Laboratory



Objectives:

- Refine catch rate estimates of finfish and shrimp by area and season for use in stock assessments
- Bycatch Reduction Device (BRD) and Turtle Excluder Device (TED) evaluation. Estimate protected species bycatch

Since 1992:

- Annual coverage approx. <1% to 2% of total shrimp effort
- Mandatory Coverage in 2007 (Gulf) and 2008 (SA)

Shrimp Trawl Bycatch Observer Program
(cont.)

Two of the Primary Objectives

1. Refine catch rate estimates of finfish and shrimp by area and season

2. Bycatch reduction device (BRD)/turtle excluder device (TED) evaluation

Shrimp Trawl Bycatch Observer Program
(cont.)

Bycatch Characterization

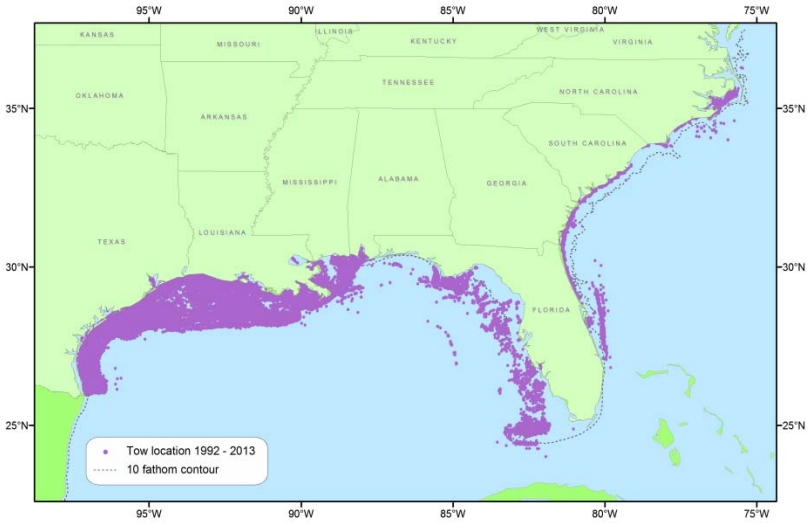
- Total weight of one randomly selected net
- Total shrimp, red snapper
- ~ 20% sample to species level

- Fishery observer sorting catch by species
- 808 Unique Species

Shrimp Trawl Bycatch Observer Program
(cont.)

Selected randomly – based on previous year of landings/effort (from NMFS data)

- Stratified by:
  - Area (states)
  - Depth
  - Season
    - January - April
    - May - August
    - September - December
- Target:
  - ~1400 Sea days
    - 80% Gulf of Mexico
    - 20% South Atlantic



- 3,101 trips (1 to 62 days)
- More than 56,500 tows
- 29,262 sea days (more than 263,000 hours)
- Coverage ≤ 2% of annual directed effort; varies - funding

Shrimp Trawl Bycatch Observer Program
(cont.)

Vessels	1,500(Gulf); 500 (S. Atlantic) federal (~2000 Federal Vessels) Steel Hull/Freezer Capacity (Gulf) Wooden/Ice (SA)
Vessel Length	31 - 98 ft (Avg. = 74 ft) Gulf (Smaller 64 ft SA)
Crew	1 to 5
Trips	1-62 days •Avg. = 13.8 days (Gulf); •Avg. = 2.9 days (S. Atlantic)
Tow Depth	0.5 - 65 fms (Avg. = 16.4 fms) Gulf (4.8 SA) (34 Rock) (222 RR)
Tow Time	0.1 to 20.5 hrs •Gulf - 5.2 hours •South Atlantic - 2.8 hours

Reef Fish Observer Program

Administered by SEFSC-Galveston Laboratory

Objectives:

Provide quantitative biological, environmental, vessel and gear-selectivity information relative to directed reef fish fishery operating in the U.S. GOM

Catch and fishing effort data for targeted and bycatch species (including protected species) collected and analyzed by area, season and gear type

Mortality rates of discarded species determined for depth, size and method of capture.

Coverage:

Voluntary 1993 - 1995

Mandatory 2006 -present

- Longline, modified buoy gear
- Vertical gear (handline and bandit)
- 3% coverage combined

Reef Fish Observer Program
(cont.)

Selected randomly – based on previous year of effort (sea days – from coastal logbook)

- Stratified by:
  - Area (eastern and western Gulf)
  - Gear type
  - Season
    - January - March
    - April - June
    - July - September
    - October - December
- Target:
    - core reef (3 gears)
    - special reef fish selections (V trips) (Reef Fish Biological Opinion)

SEFSC Galveston Reef Fish Observer Program
Set Locations 2006 – 2014