



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

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NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE OFFICE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT ANNOUNCES THE AVAILABILITY OF A REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM FOR GULF OF MEXICO REEF FISH VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

NOAA Fisheries Service Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) announces the availability of a reimbursement program for vessel owners and/or operators who have purchased a vessel monitoring system (VMS) unit for the purpose of complying with fishery regulations requiring the use of VMS in the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Fishery. These funds will be used to reimburse vessel owners and/or operators for the purchase price of the VMS.

Currently, only those vessel owners and/or operators purchasing a VMS for compliance with fishery management regulations applicable to the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Fishery are eligible for this funding opportunity. **However, should other VMS programs be implemented in any other United States federal fishery, this grant opportunity will be available to those participants as well. Therefore, NOAA Fisheries Service strongly recommends that any eligible participants comply with the VMS requirements and apply for reimbursement as soon as possible.** The reimbursable expense is the purchase price of the least expensive VMS unit type-approved for the Reef Fish Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico. Currently, the least expensive unit costs \$3,095.

Eligibility

To be eligible for reimbursement, vessel owners and/or operators must: (1) purchase an VMS type-approved for the Reef Fish Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico for which the vessel owner and /or operator holds a valid commercial permit, (2) have the VMS installed on the vessel and activated utilizing a type-approved communication provider, (3) contact the

VMS Support Center by calling 888-219-9228 to ensure the vessel is properly registered in the VMS system, and (4) not be in arrears with a payment owed to NOAA Fisheries Service for a civil monetary penalty.

Process

Vessel owners and/or operators that have purchased a VMS unit, and have validated their compliance with the applicable regulations through the OLE, may contact the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC), for a reimbursement application see contact information (see contact information below). The completed application and proof of eligibility must be returned to the PSMFC. The proof of eligibility includes: (1) a copy of the valid commercial reef fish permit, (2) proof of purchase and the purchased price of the type-approved VMS unit, and (3) a valid compliance confirmation code issued by OLE.

Contact information

- VMS Support Center, phone: 888-219-9228
- Southeast Region OLE, 263 13th Avenue South, Suite 109, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701, phone: 800-758-4833
- PSMFC, 205 SE Spokane Street, Suite 100, Portland, Oregon 97202, phone: 503-595-3100, fax: 503-595-3232
- Frequently asked questions about VMS are available at: <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>. Click on "vessel monitoring systems."

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