



# Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 9721 Executive Center Drive N., St. Petersburg, FL 33702

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## *Proposed Rule to Reduce Bycatch in the Shrimp Fishery of the Eastern Gulf of Mexico*

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) has published a proposed rule in the *Federal Register* that would implement actions outlined in Amendment 10 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Shrimp Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico (FMP) that has been submitted by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC).

NOAA Fisheries announced the availability of Amendment 10 for public comment in August, with comments accepted through October 14, 2003.

The proposed rule would establish a requirement for the use of bycatch reduction devices (BRDs) in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) east of 85°30' west longitude (approximately east of Cape San Blas, Florida).

The proposed rule would also establish a criterion whereby BRDs would be certified for use in this regional fishery. To be certified for use, the BRD must be capable of reducing at least 30 percent of the total weight of the finfish catch. BRDs currently certified for other areas of the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic region, including Florida territorial waters, would meet this requirement.

The intended effect of the proposed actions is to conserve stocks of finfish species found in the bycatch, while sustaining the viability of the shrimp fishery with a minimum of economic and social impacts. Written comments on the proposed rule are requested from the public by **November 14, 2003**.

Written comments must be mailed to Dr. Steve Branstetter, Southeast Regional Office, National Marine Fisheries Service, 9721 Executive Center Drive North, St. Petersburg, FL 33702. Comments may also be sent via fax to 727-570-5583. Comments will not be accepted if submitted via e-mail or Internet.

### **Background**

Amendment 9 to the FMP, implemented in 1998, addressed bycatch reduction requirements for the shrimp fishery operating in the EEZ west of Cape San Blas, Florida. Implementation of the proposed actions in Amendment 10 would complement Amendment 9, and would complete the GMFMC's responsibilities to meet requirements in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to reduce bycatch in the Gulf of Mexico shrimp fishery to the extent practicable.

All comments received on the amendment or the proposed rule during their respective comment periods will be considered in NOAA Fisheries' decision to approve, disapprove, or partially approve the amendment. Should NOAA Fisheries approve the amendment, all comments received on either the amendment or the proposed rule will be addressed in a final rule.

This and other news releases are available on the Southeast Regional Office homepage at <http://caldera.sero.nmfs.gov>. NOAA Fisheries is an agency of the Department of Commerce.