

Fishery Conservation and Management

§ 622.9

EDITORIAL NOTE: For FEDERAL REGISTER citations affecting § 622.7, see the List of CFR Sections Affected, which appears in the Finding Aids section of the printed volume and at www.fdsys.gov.

§ 622.8 At-sea observer coverage.

(a) *Required coverage*—(1) *Pelagic sargassum*. A vessel that harvests or possesses pelagic sargassum on any trip in the South Atlantic EEZ must carry a NMFS-approved observer.

(2) *Golden crab*. A vessel for which a Federal commercial permit for golden crab has been issued must carry a NMFS-approved observer, if the vessel's trip is selected by the SRD for observer coverage.

(3) *Gulf reef fish*. A vessel for which a Federal commercial vessel permit for Gulf reef fish or a charter vessel/headboat permit for Gulf reef fish has been issued must carry a NMFS-approved observer, if the vessel's trip is selected by the SRD for observer coverage. Vessel permit renewal is contingent upon compliance with this paragraph (a)(3).

(4) *South Atlantic rock or penaeid shrimp*. A vessel for which a Federal commercial permit for South Atlantic rock shrimp or South Atlantic penaeid shrimp has been issued must carry a NMFS-approved observer, if the vessel's trip is selected by the SRD for observer coverage.

(5) *Gulf shrimp*. A vessel for which a Federal commercial vessel permit for Gulf shrimp has been issued must carry a NMFS-approved observer, if the vessel's trip is selected by the SRD for observer coverage. Vessel permit renewal is contingent upon compliance with this paragraph (a)(5).

(6) *South Atlantic snapper-grouper*. (i) A vessel for which a Federal commercial vessel permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper or a charter vessel/headboat permit for South Atlantic snapper-grouper has been issued must carry a NMFS-approved observer, if the vessel's trip is selected by the SRD for observer coverage. Vessel permit renewal is contingent upon compliance with this paragraph (a)(6)(i).

(ii) Any other vessel that fishes for South Atlantic snapper-grouper in the South Atlantic EEZ must carry a NMFS-approved observer, if the ves-

sel's trip is selected by the SRD for observer coverage.

(b) *Notification to the SRD*. When observer coverage is required, an owner or operator must advise the SRD in writing not less than 5 days in advance of each trip of the following:

(1) Departure information (port, dock, date, and time).

(2) Expected landing information (port, dock, and date).

(c) *Observer accommodations and access*. An owner or operator of a vessel on which a NMFS-approved observer is embarked must:

(1) Provide accommodations and food that are equivalent to those provided to the crew.

(2) Allow the observer access to and use of the vessel's communications equipment and personnel upon request for the transmission and receipt of messages related to the observer's duties.

(3) Allow the observer access to and use of the vessel's navigation equipment and personnel upon request to determine the vessel's position.

(4) Allow the observer free and unobstructed access to the vessel's bridge, working decks, holding bins, weight scales, holds, and any other space used to hold, process, weigh, or store fish.

(5) Allow the observer to inspect and copy the vessel's log, communications logs, and any records associated with the catch and distribution of fish for that trip.

[61 FR 43957, Aug. 27, 1996, as amended at 63 FR 57590, Oct. 28, 1998; 68 FR 57378, Oct. 3, 2003; 70 FR 32272, June 2, 2005; 70 FR 73387, Dec. 12, 2005; 71 FR 56047, Sept. 26, 2006; 74 FR 58912, Nov. 16, 2009]

EFFECTIVE DATE NOTE: At 74 FR 58912, Nov. 16, 2009, § 622.8(a)(6) was added. This paragraph contains information collection and recordkeeping requirements and will not become effective until approval has been given by the Office of Management and Budget.

§ 622.9 Vessel monitoring systems (VMSs).

(a) *Requirements for use of a VMS*—(1) *South Atlantic rock shrimp*. An owner or operator of a vessel that has been issued a limited access endorsement for South Atlantic rock shrimp (until January 27, 2010) or a Commercial Vessel Permit for Rock Shrimp (South Atlantic EEZ) must ensure that such vessel

has an operating VMS approved by NMFS for use in the South Atlantic rock shrimp fishery on board when on a trip in the South Atlantic. An operating VMS includes an operating mobile transmitting unit on the vessel and a functioning communication link between the unit and NMFS as provided by a NMFS-approved communication service provider.

(2) *Gulf reef fish.* The VMS requirements of this paragraph (a)(2) apply throughout the Gulf of Mexico and adjacent states.

(i) *General VMS requirement.* An owner or operator of a vessel that has been issued a commercial vessel permit for Gulf reef fish, including a charter vessel/headboat issued such a permit even when under charter, must ensure that such vessel has an operating VMS approved by NMFS for use in the Gulf reef fish fishery on board at all times whether or not the vessel is underway, unless exempted by NMFS under the power-down exemptions specified in paragraph (a)(2)(iv) of this section and in the NOAA Enforcement Vessel Monitoring System Requirements for the Reef Fish Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico. This NOAA Enforcement Vessel Monitoring System Requirements document is available from NMFS, Office for Law Enforcement (OLE), Southeast Region, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701; phone: 800-758-4833. An operating VMS includes an operating mobile transmitting unit on the vessel and a functioning communication link between the unit and NMFS as provided by a NMFS-approved communication service provider. NMFS OLE maintains a current list of approved VMS units and communication providers which is available from the VMS Support Center, NMFS OLE, 8484 Georgia Avenue, Suite 415, Silver Spring, MD 20910 or by calling toll free 888-219-9228. If a VMS unit approved for the Gulf reef fish fishery is removed from the approved list by NMFS OLE, a vessel owner who purchased and installed such a VMS unit prior to its removal from the approved list will be considered to be in compliance with the requirement to have an approved unit, unless otherwise notified by NMFS OLE. At the end of a VMS unit's

service life, it must be replaced with a currently approved unit for the fishery.

(ii) *Hourly reporting requirement.* An owner or operator of a vessel subject to the requirements of paragraph (a)(2) of this section must ensure that the required VMS unit transmits a signal indicating the vessel's accurate position at least once an hour, 24 hours a day every day unless exempted under paragraphs (a)(2)(iii) or (iv) of this section.

(iii) *In-port exemption.* While in port, an owner or operator of a vessel with a type-approved VMS unit configured with the 4-hour reporting feature may utilize the 4-hour reporting feature rather than comply with the hourly reporting requirement specified in paragraph (a)(2)(ii) of this section. Once the vessel is no longer in port, the hourly reporting requirement specified in paragraph (a)(2)(ii) of this section applies. For the purposes of this paragraph (a)(2) of this section, "in port" means secured at a land-based facility, or moored or anchored after the return to a dock, berth, beach, seawall, or ramp.

(iv) *Power-down exemptions.* An owner or operator of a vessel subject to the requirement to have a VMS operating at all times as specified in paragraph (a)(2)(i) of this section can be exempted from that requirement and may power down the required VMS unit if—

(A) The vessel will be continuously out of the water or in port, as defined in paragraph (a)(2)(iii) of this section, for more than 72 consecutive hours;

(B) The owner or operator of the vessel applies for and obtains a valid letter of exemption from NMFS OLE VMS personnel as specified in the NOAA Enforcement Vessel Monitoring System Requirements for the Reef Fish Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico. This is a one-time requirement. The letter of exemption must be maintained on board the vessel and remains valid for all subsequent power-down requests conducted consistent with the provisions of paragraphs (a)(2)(iv)(C) and (D) of this section.

(C) Prior to each power-down, the owner or operator of the vessel files a report to NMFS OLE VMS program personnel, using the VMS unit's e-mail, that includes the name of the person filing the report, vessel name, vessel

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U.S. Coast Guard documentation number or state registration number, commercial vessel reef fish permit number, vessel port location during VMS power down, estimated duration of the power down exemption, and reason for power down; and

(D) The owner or operator enters the power-down code through the use of the VMS Declaration form on the terminal and, prior to powering down the VMS, receives a confirmation, through the VMS terminal, that the form was successfully delivered.

(v) *Declaration of fishing trip and gear.* Prior to departure for each trip, a vessel owner or operator must report to NMFS any fishery the vessel will participate in on that trip and the specific type(s) of fishing gear, using NMFS-defined gear codes, that will be on board the vessel.

(b) *Installation and activation of a VMS.* Only a VMS that has been approved by NMFS for the applicable fishery may be used, and the VMS must be installed by a qualified marine electrician. When installing and activating the NMFS-approved VMS, or when reinstalling and reactivating such VMS, the vessel owner or operator must—

(1) Follow procedures indicated on a NMFS-approved installation and activation checklist for the applicable fishery, which is available from NMFS Office for Law Enforcement, Southeast Region, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701; phone: 800-758-4833; and

(2) Submit to NMFS Office for Law Enforcement, Southeast Region, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701, a statement certifying compliance with the checklist, as prescribed on the checklist.

(3) Submit to NMFS Office for Law Enforcement, Southeast Region, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701, a vendor-completed installation certification checklist, which is available from NMFS Office for Law Enforcement, Southeast Region, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701; phone: 800-758-4833.

(c) *Interference with the VMS.* No person may interfere with, tamper with, alter, damage, disable, or impede the

operation of the VMS, or attempt any of the same.

(d) *Interruption of operation of the VMS.* When a vessel's VMS is not operating properly, the owner or operator must immediately contact NMFS Office for Law Enforcement, Southeast Region, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701, phone: 800-758-4833, and follow instructions from that office. If notified by NMFS that a vessel's VMS is not operating properly, the owner and operator must follow instructions from that office. In either event, such instructions may include, but are not limited to, manually communicating to a location designated by NMFS the vessel's positions or returning to port until the VMS is operable.

(e) *Access to position data.* As a condition of authorized fishing for or possession of fish in a fishery subject to VMS requirements in this section, a vessel owner or operator subject to the requirements for a VMS in this section must allow NMFS, the USCG, and their authorized officers and designees access to the vessel's position data obtained from the VMS.

[71 FR 45434, Aug. 9, 2006, as amended at 72 FR 73273, Dec. 27, 2007; 73 FR 410, Jan. 3, 2008; 74 FR 50704, Oct. 1, 2009; 75 FR 82292, Dec. 30, 2010]

§ 622.10 Conservation measures for protected resources.

(a) *Atlantic dolphin and wahoo pelagic longliners.* The owner or operator of a vessel for which a commercial permit for Atlantic dolphin and wahoo has been issued, as required under § 622.4(a)(2)(xii), and that has on board a pelagic longline must post inside the wheelhouse the sea turtle handling and release guidelines provided by NMFS. Such owner or operator must also comply with the sea turtle bycatch mitigation measures, including gear requirements and sea turtle handling requirements, as specified in § 635.21(c)(5)(i) and (ii) of this chapter, respectively. For the purpose of this paragraph, a vessel is considered to have pelagic longline gear on board when a power-operated longline hauler, a mainline, floats capable of supporting the mainline, and leaders (gangions) with hooks are on board. Removal of any one of