



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

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SEP 26 2008

Thomas D. McIlwain, Ph.D.
Chair, Gulf of Mexico Fishery
Management Council
2203 N. Lois Avenue, Suite 100
Tampa, FL 33607

Re: Vessel Monitoring System Advisory Panel

Tom
Dear ~~Dr. McIlwain~~:

I am writing after extensive discussions with participants in Gulf of Mexico fisheries subject to the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) requirements that the Council established in Amendment 18A to the fishery management plan for Gulf Reef Fish. These fishermen have raised a number of concerns regarding the implementation and operation of the VMS. They have also made a suggestion which the Agency has agreed to present to the Council, and that is the purpose of this letter.

The Council should consider establishing a Vessel Monitoring System Advisory Panel. The membership of this panel should include fishers, VMS vendors, law enforcement personnel, and others whom the Council deems appropriate. The Council's charge to the panel should include direction to develop recommendations for maintaining or improving the effectiveness and practicability of the VMS in Gulf of Mexico fisheries, and whatever additional instruction the Council finds appropriate.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. I look forward to working with the Council on this matter.

Sincerely,

Roy E. Crabtree, Ph.D.
Regional Administrator

cc: Council members
Executive Director

