UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

THE DIRECTOR

OCT 30 2013

Mr. John Williams
Executive Director
Southern Shrimp Alliance
P.O. Box 1577
Tarpon Springs, FL 34688

Dear Mr. Williams:

Thank you for your letter regarding sustainability of the federally managed U.S. Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic shrimp fisheries.

Based on the most recent scientific information, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service considers the federal shrimp fishery in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico to be sustainably managed consistent with the fishery management plans. Shrimp fisheries occurring in state waters are not addressed here. Up-to-date information on domestic fisheries is available on the FishWatch website at www.FishWatch.gov.

Federally managed U.S. Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic shrimp fisheries include brown, pink, white, rock, and royal red shrimp. Shrimp are essentially an "annual crop"—most do not survive longer than 2 years. Scientists monitor shrimp abundance to ensure the stock is healthy. They also examine the amount of surviving parents and environmental conditions, such as weather and water temperatures. As long as environmental conditions are favorable, shrimp are very productive and can rebound from low abundance one year to high abundance the next.

Fishermen fishing in federal waters must have a permit to harvest shrimp, and must submit reports on catch and fishing effort. These fishermen must also comply with federal sea turtle conservation requirements, including the use of turtle excluder devices—a grid of bars fitted into the net with an opening at either the top or bottom. Small animals such as shrimp can pass through, but the grid stops larger animals such as sea turtles. In addition, shrimp fishermen must install bycatch reduction devices, which are designed to retain shrimp but allow fish to exit the nets.

These marine fishery resources are harvested in compliance with federal fishery management plans developed by the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils to ensure long-term sustainable use. Sustainable fisheries require both conserving fish stocks and maintaining a viable industry that supports commercial and recreational fishing and that provides quality seafood to consumers. Three pillars that support sustainable marine fisheries in the United States are strong science, effective management and regulation, and enforcement.

Federal fisheries in the United States—including those for shrimp—are conducted under science-based fishery management plans developed by regional fishery management councils through an open, public process, and using the best scientific information available. The fishery

THE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR
FOR FISHERIES

management plans address many sustainability requirements, including the 10 National Standards of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. These include considering social and economic outcomes for fishing communities, preventing overfishing, rebuilding depleted stocks, minimizing bycatch and interactions with protected species, identifying essential fish habitat, and mitigating fishing impacts on habitat. The fishing and seafood industries are also key contributors to sustainability through their investments in sustainable practices and innovations, such as improved fishing gear to reduce bycatch and habitat impacts.

I look forward to working with you as we continue to build sustainable wild-caught and aquaculture fisheries.

Sincerely,

Samuel D. Rauch III
Deputy Assistant Administrator
for Regulatory Programs,
performing the functions and duties of the
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries