



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere
Washington, D.C. 20230

November 24, 2021

Mr. John Williams
Executive Director
Southern Shrimp Alliance
955 E. MLK Drive, Suite D
Tarpon Springs, FL 34689

Dear Mr. Williams:

Thank you for your letter regarding emerging marine activities, including offshore wind development and aquaculture, that could affect the traditional shrimp fisheries and associated onshore businesses in the Gulf of Mexico. I appreciate your recommendations that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and other Federal agencies should consider as we make decisions about these activities.

On January 27, 2021, President Biden issued Executive Order 14008 on *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*, which included the Administration's goal of deploying 30 gigawatts of offshore wind energy by 2030 in a way that allows for protection of living marine resources, habitats, fisheries, and fishing communities, including through meaningful stakeholder engagement. To that end, I am committed to working collaboratively with our Federal partners, including the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), to help fulfill this important charge. In doing so, I understand the need to consider the elements you outline in your letter: analytical approach to spatial planning; using the best available science when analyzing the impacts to living marine resources, habitats, fisheries, and fishing communities; and engaging with affected stakeholders, including the shrimp industry in the Gulf of Mexico.

On November 16, NOAA published an Atlas for the Gulf of Mexico that provides the highest level of spatial intelligence for the region to date. While the Atlas was produced to inform the Aquaculture Opportunity Area (AOA) selection process, its peer-reviewed spatial mapping analyses can be applied to offshore wind development and other ocean industries. It is based on a spatial data inventory of over 200 data layers relevant to administrative boundaries, national security (i.e., military), navigation and transportation, energy and industry infrastructure, commercial and recreational fishing, natural and cultural resources, and oceanography. In consultation with BOEM, NOAA is exploring how to apply the Atlas AOA approach to developing Wind Energy Areas to help avoid or minimize potential conflicts with other activities and user groups.

THE ADMINISTRATOR



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Thank you for providing comments in December 2020 as part of that process. I look forward to continuing to work with ocean-use industries, stakeholders, and coastal communities on these issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Spinrad", with a stylized, flowing script.

Dr. Richard W. Spinrad
Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere
and NOAA Administrator