

***Advocacy Submits Comments to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Regarding Proposed Sea Turtle Conservation Rule***

On June 28th, 2012, the Office of Advocacy of the U.S. Small Business Administration (Advocacy) submitted a comment to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) regarding its proposed sea turtle conservation rule to require the use of turtle excluder devices in the nets of all skimmer trawls, pusher-head trawls, and wing nets rigged for shrimp fishing. Through a series of regional roundtables and meetings, Advocacy conducted outreach with small businesses operating in the southeastern U.S. shrimp fisheries. These businesses expressed concerns that the proposed rule would cause significant economic harm to the already fragile shrimping industry in the Gulf of Mexico.

- Small business stakeholders informed Advocacy that NOAA's analysis failed to take into account the fact that turtle excluder devices cannot be safely used on small shrimping vessels, and thus underestimated the economic impact of the rule on small entities.
- Advocacy recommended that NOAA further evaluate alternatives that would exclude vessels under a certain length from the regulations to avoid forcing significant number of small businesses out of the industry.
- Advocacy also urged NOAA to reconsider implementing its proposed rule unless it can show a stronger link between increased sea turtle strandings and commercial shrimping, and rule out other causes raised by small business stakeholders.

For more information, visit Advocacy's webpage at <http://www.sba.gov/advocacy> or contact Jamie Belcore Saloom at 202/205-6890 or Jamie.Belcore@sba.gov