

NOTICE OF INTENT

Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Wildlife and Fisheries Commission

The Wildlife and Fisheries Commission hereby advertises its intent to establish rules and regulations which require the use of Vessel Monitoring Systems for use by a vessel taking oysters for commercial purposes under the authority of the Oyster Seed Ground Vessel Permit. Data collected through this system will enable the Department to better manage the public oyster resource and allow the Department to assess where reef building efforts need to be focused increasing accessibility to the industry over time.

TITLE 76

WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES

PART VII. FISH AND OTHER AQUATIC LIFE

Chapter 5. Oysters

525. Commercial Oyster Seed Ground Vessel Permit

A – D ...

E. Operations

1. Permits are non-transferable and only the vessel listed on the permit can be used with the permit and only one vessel is allowed per permit. The original valid permit must be onboard at all times while operating under the permit.

2. Permits cannot be assigned or transferred or used by any other vessel than the one to which permit was issued.

3. Vessels engaged in an activity for which this permit is required must have onboard the vessel the valid original permit and shall show the permit upon demand to a duly authorized agent of the Department.

4. The Secretary shall have the authority to require the use of a vessel monitoring system (VMS) for use by a vessel taking oysters for commercial purposes under the authority of the oyster seed ground vessel permit in accordance with R.S. 56:433.1. All equipment, installation, and service costs associated with this requirement shall be paid for by the Department. The Secretary shall review this requirement annually for management needs and funding availability and may, at his sole discretion, make the determination to continue the requirement.

a. All vessels operating under the authority of the oyster seed ground vessel permit will be required to have a VMS on board which is fully operable and recording data while vessel is fishing on public oyster seed grounds.

i. In instances where funding is limited, the Secretary may choose a sub-sample of vessels through use of a random selection process, geographic area, and / or trip ticket landings data.

b. Owners of vessels requiring the use of VMS will be notified of such requirement by certified mail at the address listed on their permit.

c. Notwithstanding applicable requirements pursuant to provisions in LAC 76:VII.371, any vessel required to use VMS under this provision must use the VMS system provided by the Department,

d. Presumption. If a VMS unit fails to record or transmit the required signal of a vessel's position (identified by the indicator light), the vessel shall be deemed to have incurred a VMS violation, for as long as the unit fails to record or transmit a signal, unless a preponderance of evidence shows that the failure to transmit was due to an unavoidable malfunction, or disruption of the transmission that occurred while the vessel was declared out of

the fishery, as applicable, or was not at sea. If the indicator light is on, then the unit is presumed to be functioning properly; however, if the indicator light is off then the unit is presumed to not be recording or transmitting. The permit holder shall have an affirmative duty to immediately notify the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) if the VMS fails to record or transmit the required signal or if the indicator light indicates such a failure.

e. Replacement. If the indicator light on the VMS unit is not working, then upon notification to LDWF, a new unit shall be re-installed in no later than 7 days. During the period without a functional VMS unit, it is the affirmative duty of the permit holder to report daily to LDWF, prior to departure, the vessel's anticipated fishing location and estimated time on water, and upon return, the vessel's actual fishing location and time on water.

f. Access. All vessel owners shall allow the LDWF, and their authorized wildlife enforcement agents or designees access to the vessel's VMS unit and data, if applicable, and location data obtained from its VMS unit, if required, at the time of or after its transmission to the vendor or receiver, as the case may be.

g. Tampering. Tampering with a VMS, a VMS unit, or a VMS signal, is prohibited. Tampering includes any activity that is likely to affect the unit's ability to operate properly, signal, or accurately compute the vessel's position fix.

h. Violation. Failure to abide by any regulation set forth by this section regarding the use or operation of a VMS by a vessel taking oysters for commercial purposes under the authority of the oyster seed ground vessel permit, shall be a violation of the Louisiana Revised Statutes and shall result in immediate revocation of the permit governed herein and shall constitute a class 1 violation under the authority of R.S. 56:23. All fish taken or possessed by a person in violation of these rules shall be deemed illegally taken and possessed. The

provisions of this Section do not exempt any person from any other laws, rules, regulation, and license requirements for this or other jurisdictions.

F. - G. ...

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 36:610(L), R.S. 56:6, R.S. 56:23, and R.S. 56:433.1.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Wildlife and Fisheries Commission, LR 34:2681 (December 2008), amended LR .

Chapter 3. Saltwater Sport and Commercial Fishery

371. Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) Requirements

A. The following provision regarding VMS shall be applicable to all provisions of law requiring the use of VMS except where required by R.S. 56:433.1 and LAC 76: VII.525.

1. The vessel must have onboard a fully operational and approved VMS Device. Approved devices are those devices approved by NOAA Fisheries Service or the Secretary of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) for fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish fishery and which meet the minimum performance criteria specified in paragraph 2 of this subsection. In the event that a VMS device is removed from the list of approved devices, vessel owners who installed an approved VMS prior to approval of any revised list will be considered in compliance with requirements of this paragraph, unless otherwise notified by the LDWF.

2. Minimum VMS performance criteria: Basic required features of the VMS are as follows:

a. The VMS shall be satellite-based and tamper proof, i.e., shall not permit the input of false positions; furthermore, satellite selection must be automatic to provide an optimal fix and shall not be capable of being manually overridden.

b. The VMS shall be fully automatic and operational at all times, regardless of weather and environmental conditions.

c. The VMS shall be fully operable and capable of tracking the vessel in all of Louisiana coastal waters and throughout the Gulf of Mexico.

d. The VMS shall be capable of transmitting and storing information including vessel identification, date, time and latitude/longitude.

e. The VMS unit shall make all required transmissions to a designated and approved VMS vendor who shall be responsible for monitoring the vessel and reporting information to the LDWF.

f. The VMS shall provide accurate position transmissions every half-hour, except for those vessels operating solely under the Out-of-State Landing Permit mentioned in paragraph 3 that require accurate position transmissions every hour, every day of the year, during required monitoring period. In addition, the VMS shall allow polling of individual vessels or any set of vessels at any time and permit those monitoring the vessel to receive position reports in real time. For the purposes of this specification, real time shall constitute data that reflect a delay of 15 minutes or less between the displayed information and the vessel's actual position.

g. The VMS vendor shall be capable of transmitting position data to a LDWF designated computer system via a modem at a minimum speed of 9600 baud.

Transmission shall be in a file format acceptable to the LDWF. Such transmission must be made at any time upon demand of the LDWF.

h. The VMS vendor shall be capable of archiving vessel position histories for a minimum of three (3) months, as transmitted by the VMS unit, and provide transmissions to the LDWF of specified portions of archived data in response to LDWF requests in a variety of media (tape, compact disc, etc.) as specified by the LDWF.

3. Operating requirements: Except as provided in Paragraph 4 (Power Down Exemption) of this Subsection, or unless otherwise required by law, all required VMS units must transmit a signal indicating the vessel's accurate position at least every half hour, 24 hours a day, throughout the year. However, those vessels operating solely under the Out-of-State Landing Permit shall transmit a signal indicating the vessel's accurate position at least every hour, 24 hours a day throughout the year.

4. Power Down exemption: Any vessel required to have on board a fully operational VMS unit at all times, as specified in Paragraph 3 of this Subsection, is exempt from this requirement provided:

a. The vessel will be continuously out of the water for more than 72 consecutive hours; and

b. A valid letter of exemption obtained pursuant to Subparagraph 5.a. of the Subsection has been issued to the vessel and is on board the vessel is in compliance with all conditions and requirements of said letter.

A. 5. - 11. ...

AUTHORITY NOTE: Promulgated in accordance with R.S. 56:424, R.S. 56:424.1, R.S. 56:495.1, R.S. 56:497.1, and R.S. 56:433.1.

HISTORICAL NOTE: Promulgated by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Wildlife and Fisheries Commission, LR 34:887 (May 2008), amended LR .

The Secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is authorized to take any and all necessary steps on behalf of the Commission to promulgate and effectuate this notice of intent and final rule, including but not limited to, the filing of the fiscal and economic impact statement, the filing of the notice of intent and final rule and the preparation of reports and correspondence to other agencies of government.

In accordance with Act No. 1183 of 1999, the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries/Wildlife and Fisheries Commission hereby issues its Family Impact Statement in connection with the preceding Notice of Intent. This Notice of Intent will have no impact on the six criteria set out at R.S. 49:972(B).

Interested persons may submit written comments relative to the proposed rule to Mr. Jason Froeba, Office of Fisheries, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Box 98000, Baton Rouge, LA 70898-9000, prior to Thursday, March 1, 2012.

Stephen W. Sagrera

Chairman