



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

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NOAA Certifies Additional Designs and Materials for Fishermen Currently Required to Use Turtle Excluder Devices

NOAA Fisheries Service announces a final rule adding allowable Turtle Excluder Device (TED) modifications and additional certified TED designs for the shrimp and summer flounder trawl fisheries. The additional designs and modifications may enhance TED effectiveness in reducing sea turtle mortality, promote catch retention, and increase vessel fuel efficiency. The allowable modifications are not mandatory, but provide additional options for fishermen currently required to utilize TEDs.

Provisions of the rule include:

- The addition of flat bar, box pipe, and oval pipe as construction material in currently-approved TED grids.
- An increase in the maximum mesh size on TED escape flaps from 1-5/8 to 2 inches (4.1 to 5.1 cm).
- The addition of the Boone Big Boy TED and Boone Wedge Cut TED escape opening for use in the shrimp fishery.
- The addition of three large TED escape openings.
- The addition of a brace bar as an allowable modification to hard TEDs.
- The addition of the Chauvin Shrimp Deflector to improve shrimp retention.
- The addition of a new TED for use in the summer flounder fishery.

There is also a correction to the TED regulations to rectify an oversight regarding the maximum size chain that can be used on the Parker TED escape opening flap.

NOTE: This final rule is not related to the proposed rule published in the *Federal Register* on May 10, 2012, that would, if implemented, require all skimmer trawls, pusher-head trawls, and wing nets (butterfly trawls) to use TEDs in their nets.

TEDs incorporate an escape opening, usually covered by a webbing flap, which allows sea turtles to escape from trawl nets. To be approved by NOAA Fisheries, a TED design must be shown to be 97 percent effective in excluding sea turtles during testing based upon specific testing protocols.

These latest modifications were developed in coordination with the commercial trawl industry, the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and the Southeast Regional Office's Protected Resources Division. The modifications and TED designs were developed and tested by NOAA Fisheries gear specialists. Results from a study conducted by the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation were utilized in the development of these allowable modifications.

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This bulletin provides only a summary of the information regarding the existing regulations. Any discrepancies between this bulletin and the regulations as published in the *Federal Register* will be resolved in favor of the *Federal Register*.