



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council

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Michael P. Luisi, Chairman | G. Warren Elliott, Vice Chairman
Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director

April 16, 2019

Spencer Talmage
Sustainable Fisheries Division
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, NMFS
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

Dear Mr. Talmage:

The responds to Sarah Heil's letter regarding the application for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) requested by the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance, The Nature Conservancy, the Main Coast Fishermen's Association, and the Gulf of Main Research Institute, and fishermen to develop an audit-model electronic monitoring (EM) program for catch monitoring in the groundfish fishery. In fishing year 2017, we issued an EFP in support of this project requiring vessels to use EM systems on 100 percent of groundfish tris and in lieu of human observers to meeting their at-sea monitoring (ASM) requirements. Thirteen vessels participated in the project, and 81 EFP trips have been completed to date. The EFP was renewed in fishing year 2018, adding exemptions to allow participating vessels to fish in closed areas during certain time of the year. A total of 258 trips suitable for quota monitoring were completed during fishing year 2018.

On behalf of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, I support the issuance of an EFP to the applicant, i.e., Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance, along with project partners for the 2019 fishing year. The proposed participant list includes 18 vessels, 16 of which participated in the EFP in fishing year 2018. Together, they are expected to take an estimated 425 trips in fishing year 2019. The project partners expect additional vessels may join the project in fishing year 2019. Regulations implementing the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (50 CFR 584.87(b)(1)(v)(B)) require a sector to implement an at-sea or electronic monitoring program. This EFP would exempt vessels from adhering to their sector's monitoring program by not requiring an ASM when selected for ASM coverage. This EFP would also approve exemptions from §648.81(a)(3), (a)(4), (a)(5), and §648.37(b) to access several closed areas.

Please call or write if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D.
Executive Director

CMM: mjs

cc: M. Luisi, W. Elliott, S. Heil