



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

May 28, 2019

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

Dear Ms. Hansen:

The responds to Sarah Heil's letter regarding the application for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) requested by Gloucester Fisheries Commission (GFC).

On behalf of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, I support the issuance of an Exempted Fishery Permit to the applicant, i.e., GFC. The GFC submitted a complete EFP application on May 6, 2019. This EFP would allow up to 6 commercial fishing vessels to take up to 60 trips to fish for small-mesh multispecies within a portion of Small Mesh Area 1 (SMA 1) prior to the regulatory July 15 opening of the area. The open season for the small-mesh multispecies fishery within SMA 1 is July 15 through November 15. This EFP would allow up to six vessels to fish within SMA 1 as early as June 1 through July 14, 2019. Vessels would comply with standard SMA 1 gear restrictions and possession limits. This study would provide data on catch rates of small-mesh multispecies and bycatch of regulated species evaluate the potential for an earlier opening of the GOM exemption area SMA 1. The GFC is requesting exemptions from minimum mesh size gear requirements found at 50 CFR 648.80(a)(3); and from the possession limits and minimum size requirements specified at §648, subparts B and through O.

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