



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

October 25, 2019

Spencer Talmage, Fishery Management Specialist
Sustainable Fisheries Division
National Marine Fisheries Service
Greater Atlantic Regional Office
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

Dear Mr. Talmage:

This responds to Sarah Heil's letter regarding the application for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) requested by Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance and other project partners.

On behalf of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, I support the issuance of an Exempted Fishery Permit to the applicant, i.e., Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance and other project partners. On May 1, 2019 NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service renewed an EFP issued to the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance and other project partners to participate in an audit-model Electronic Monitoring (EM) program for the groundfish fishery. Fifteen vessels using a variety of gear types (e.g. hook, benthic longline, sink gillnet, bottom trawl) are participating in the project.

The Alliance requested an exemption from the codend minimum mesh size restriction in the Southern New England Regulated Mesh Area. The requested EFP, would be separate from the audit-model EM EFP, but vessels would be participating in both EFPs. This EFP would allow two trawl vessels to outfit their commercial otter trawl nets with 6-inch diamond mesh codends, in order to facilitate catch of haddock, reduce bycatch of flatfish species, and test the feasibility of EM programs as a data collection tool for research. There would be no other modifications to the trawl gear. Because the vessels are also participating in the audit-model EM EFP, they are subject to 100% EM coverage and catch accounting.

Sincerely,

Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D.
Executive Director

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