



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

February 19, 2019

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

Dear Mr. Molton:

The responds to Michael Ruccio's letter regarding the application for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) requested by Coonamesset Farm Foundation (CFF).

On behalf of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, I support the issuance of an Exempted Fishery Permit to the applicant, i.e., CFF. CFF submitted a request to renew an EFP in support of a Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program funded research project. The EFP would authorize five commercial fishing vessels to test the selectivity of alternative gillnet configurations to target haddock on Georges Bank while minimizing the catch of other groundfish species like cod and flounder. The EFP would exempt each vessel from groundfish mesh size regulations at 50 CFR 648.80(a)(4)(iv) and, for catch sampling only, the groundfish minimum fish size requirements at §648.83(a). The applicant also requested an exemption from the Closed Area I North Georges Bank Spawning Groundfish Closure §648.81(c)(3), which GARFO does not intend to approve. GARFO does not intend to approve this portion of the request because they have serious concerns about providing access to a newly approved seasonal closure designed to protect spawning groundfish, including cod and haddock.

Please call or write if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D.
Executive Director

CMM: mjs

cc: M. Luisi, W. Elliott, M. Ruccio