



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 9, 2020

Claire Fitz-Gerald
Sustainable Fisheries Division
Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, NMFS
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

Dear Ms. Fitz-Gerald:

The responds to Mike Pentony's letter regarding the application for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) requested by the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI).

On behalf of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, I support the issuance of an EFP to the applicant, i.e., GMRI. GMRI submitted an EFP application to test a maximized retention electronic monitoring (MREM) model and an accompanying dockside monitoring (DSM) program to monitor high-volume bottom-trawl vessels in the groundfish fleet. Vessels would be outfitted with EM systems (cameras and gear sensors), and the cameras would be on for 100 percent of the groundfish trips. The EFP would require participating vessels to retain and land all catch of allocated groundfish, including undersized fish that they would normally be required to discard. All other species would be handled per normal commercial fishing operations. An EM service provider would review 100 percent of the video footage to verify that the vessels did not discard allocated groundfish. Northeast Fisheries Science Center (Center) staff would conduct a secondary review of the video footage on a subset of trips.

All catch would be assessed shoreside via an accompanying DSM program. Dockside monitors would: (1) Collect biological information for undersized catch, including length-frequency data and age structures on a subset of fish in this market category; (2) Verify dealer-reported weights for all species and market categories; and (3) Inspect fish holds. Vessels would be authorized to sell catch, including undersized fish to a limited number of dealers. The vessel and dealer would work collaboratively with the Center to ensure that a dockside monitor is present to observe 100 percent of offloads for this project. Participating dealers would be required to accommodate monitors; sampling protocols and all totes containing undersized fish would be accompanied by a tag identifying the program and the vessel trip report (VTR) number.

Please call or write if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C Moore", is positioned above the printed name of the signatory.

Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D.
Executive Director

CMM: mjs

cc: M. Luisi, W. Elliott, m. Pentony