



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 Nature Conservancy.

On behalf of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, I support the issuance of an EFP to the applicant, i.e., The Nature Conservancy. This EFP would allow participants to use electronic monitoring systems in lieu of at-sea-monitors in support of a study to develop electronic monitoring for catch monitoring in the Northeast multispecies fishery. On groundfish trips selected for this observer coverage, vessels participating in this EFP would use electronic monitoring (EM) in lieu of human at-sea-monitoring (ASM), and in addition to Northeast Fishery Observer Program (NEFOP) observers. Vessels would adhere to a vessel-specific Vessel Monitoring Plan detailing at-sea catch handling protocols. An EM service provider would review 100 percent of the video footage. The provider would also produce an EM summary report identifying, counting, and generating weight estimate for all groundfish discards, which it would submit to the NMFS Greater Atlantic Fisheries Regional Office. These data would be used for catch accounting purposes on trips selected for ASM coverage. EM data would not be used for catch accounting in place of observer data on NEFOP trip. Following the EM service provider's review, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center would conduct a secondary review of the EM summary reports for a subset of EFP trips.

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 typed name of the signatory.

Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D.
Executive Director

CMM: mjs

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