



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 11, 2019

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

Dear Ms. Vasta:

This responds to Sarah Heil's letter regarding the application for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) requested by Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MA DMF) and Dartmouth, School for Marine Science and Technology (SMAST).

On behalf of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, I support the issuance of an Exempted Fishery Permit to the applicant, i.e. MA DMF and SMAST. MA DMF and SMAST submitted a complete application for an EFP on August 29, 2019 to conduct a study of Atlantic cod on and around Cox Ledge in Southern New England. Data collected through this EFP would help scientists better characterize spawning seasons, sex ratios, demographics, genetics, and growth rates of cod around the Deepwater Wind Lease Area. The EFP would exempt participating vessels from the following Federal regulations, for sampling purposes only:

1. Recreational minimum fish size limit for Atlantic cod (§648.89(b); and
2. Recreational possession limit for Atlantic cod (§648.89(c)).

Under this EFP, researchers from MA DMF and SMAST would accompany 4 charter/party vessels on approximately 24 for-hire fishing trips during November 2019-August 2021. During these trips, customers would catch cod using standard recreational rod and reel gear. Researchers would opportunistically collect biological samples from legal cod kept by customers. Researchers would also opportunistically tag sub-legal cod and retain sub-legal cod for biological sampling. Approximately 240 sub-legal cod would be temporarily retained for tagging purposes, and approximately 120-240 sub-legal cod would be retained for biological sampling as part of this project. Charter/party customers would not retain undersize cod.

Sincerely,

Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D.
Executive Director

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