



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southeast Regional Office
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505
(727) 824-5305; FAX (727) 824-5308
<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>

F/SER24:SB

MAY 25 2011

Mr. Robert Mahood
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
One Southpark Circle
Suite 306
Charleston, South Carolina 29407-4699

Dear Mr. Mahood:

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service requests the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council review the enclosed Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) application at the June 2011 meeting. The EFP proposal was submitted by the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Inc. (Foundation). The described research is part of three ongoing Cooperative Agreements (No. NA08NMF4330406, No. NA09NMF4540135, and No. NA10NMF4540108), plus two pending Cooperative Research Program projects awarded to the Foundation by NOAA Fisheries Service. The research is intended to involve commercial fishermen in the collection of fundamental fisheries information. Resource collection efforts support the development and evaluation of fisheries management and regulatory options. The EFP, if approved by both the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Councils, would allow Foundation observers aboard commercial shrimp vessels to retain as many as 500 specimens of federally-managed finfishes outside of the allowable harvest. The EFP would exempt Foundation observers from bag limits, size limits, quotas, seasonal restrictions, and gear authorizations contained in 50 CFR Part 622 when possessing Council-managed species as part of scientific research activities during the period from August 1, 2011, through December 31, 2013. Retention may be needed for extended onboard examination, later shoreside analyses or identification, or as documentation of quality assurance in the data collection process.

The goal of the research is to provide additional information on the catch, bycatch, discards, and the ability to reduce such bycatch and discards in the southeastern shrimp fishery. This information would improve catch and effort data in the shrimp fishery, as well as improve information used in stock assessments for a wide variety of federally-managed finfish that are important to both recreational and commercial fishing interests.

Sincerely,

Roy E. Crabtree, Ph.D.
Regional Administrator

Enclosure

