

## **Request for Exempted Fishing Permit**

Mr. Lewis Augusta, Big Fish, Inc.  
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### **Statement of Purpose**

The principal investigator Capt. Lewis Augusta, is requesting an exempted fishing permit (EFP) in order to harvest fish during the closed seasons for vermilion snapper (November 2009 – March 2010), and shallow-water grouper complex (January 2010 – April 2010). Capt. Augusta's headboat operation, Big Fish Inc., with paying passengers would be used as his sampling platform. The applicant would be interested in conducting a tagging program for shallow water snapper-grouper species using tags and tagging training provided by NMFS. Additionally, Capt. Augusta intends to survey the availability of bait and types of bait in areas fished. He would also attempt to document venting and dehooking tool efficacy by recording release mortality events after using these tools. The purpose of harvesting these species during their respective seasonal closures is to supplement biological data that would not be recorded through the MRFSS or headboat logbook reporting programs during those time periods. Currently, there is no federal, state, or private entity funding for this project.

### **Project Specifications**

**Time Period:** An EFP is requested for a sampling period of January 1, 2010 through June 1, 2010. Fishing would occur 5 days/week within the vermilion and shallow water seasonal closures, weather permitting. Soak time for gear is approximately 4.5 hours per hook.

**Location:** Sampling will occur in federal waters off Ft. Pierce, Florida. Specifically, the southern boundary-43100 line LORAN coordinate, the eastern boundary 61940 line LORAN coordinate, and the northern boundary-43525 line LORAN coordinate.

**Species and number to be taken:** Species that will be harvested include vermilion snapper, gag, black grouper, red grouper, scamp, red hind, rock hind, coney, graysby, yellowfin grouper, yellowmouth grouper, and tiger grouper. A maximum of 75 vermilion snapper, and 25 fish from the shallow water snapper-grouper complex would be harvested per week during the seasonal closures. For the total time period for which this EFP is requested this equals approximately 900 vermilion snapper and 400 shallow water snapper-grouper.

**Gear type:** Rod and reel. The number of hooks in the water would range between 16-70, the average number of hooks in the water on any given headboat trip would be approximately 40. Capt. Augusta would also use fish tags for released fish. Exact type of tags is unknown as they are expected to be provided by an appropriate agency.

**Species disposition after harvest:** Capt. Augusta's passengers would retain or give away the per person bag limit of vermilion snapper and shallow water snapper grouper species, unless instructed to do otherwise. The fish may also be made available for 24 hours after harvest at a dockside location in order to facilitate biological sampling by interested biologists.

**Project participants:** In addition to the principal investigator, each paying passenger on board any headboat trip conducted during the EFP time frame would be considered a project participant. Big Fish Inc. patrons would be the primary harvesters of the subject species under the requested EFP.

**Vessel information:** F/V Capt. Lew. A 65 foot party fishing boat licensed to carry 70 passengers up to 100 miles offshore. The vessel ID number is 907086.

**Other project specification noted by the applicant:** Capt. Augusta is willing to facilitate arrangements for an observer to be placed on each trip. Logbook data will continue to be submitted to Ariel Poholek of FWCC.