November 13, 2014

To: Roy E. Crabtree, PhD

c/o: Jack McGovern, PhD
NOAA Fisheries Service
Southeast Regional Office
Sustainable Fisheries Division
263 13th Ave. South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

Re: Request for Exempted Fishing Permit for Lionfish research.

Dear Dr. Crabtree,

This letter is a request of the Eastern Carolina Artificial Reef Association (ECARA) for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) for the research project titled *Assessing harvest efficiencies and consumer demand for North Carolina lionfish*. We request an LOA for the time period of October 1, 2014 through December 31, 2016.

The requested EFP is intended to support continued research on traps that could be used for collecting invasive lionfish off Eastern North Carolina artificial reefs and hard bottom areas. Additionally, this project intends to assess consumers' preference for lionfish as an exotic food source in a restaurant setting to determine if Carteret County, North Carolina would support a consumer market for the species. Research efforts are in conjunction with research scientists at local Universities and federal Research Organizations.

Two sets of five Maine lobster traps and crab pot Christmas trees (a type of fish attracting device, see attached grant proposal for a photograph) will be connected by a chain with no buoy lines to the surface, and deployed along designated bottom features with approximately 30 ft (9.14 m) to 50 ft (15.24 m) in between each trap. After deployment, divers will verify the position of the traps to ensure the traps are located between 20 ft (6.10 m) and 30 ft (9.14 m) from the designated bottom feature. Trap deployment would occur year-round between Latitude 33°10'N to Latitude 36°30'N along the North Carolina coast) from three miles out, and up to 60 fathoms in depth. The traps will be deployed for at least 48 hours and no longer than three weeks. After 48 hours divers will count and identify the number of fish inside and around the traps, and record video prior to hauling the traps. We aim to do at least quarterly deployments, which will also include surveys of the area listing the numbers of lionfish as well as prey items.

Fish species captured in the Main lobster traps will be quantified to the lowest possible taxon. Video images will be used to assess the success of the crab pot Christmas trees as attracting devices. Bycatch species found in the traps will be measured, photographed/video documented, and released alive. Any egg bearing lobsters captured will remain in the water and released alive. Captured lionfish will be counted, measured, and prepared for consumption for patrons of nearby restaurants. Lionfish will not be sold to restaurants, but instead will be offered, free of charge, to patrons as part of the consumer demand assessment portion of the research project.

Participating vessels are the Outrageous V [USCG documentation # 598632, Captain Terry Leonard] and the Captain's Lady[NC 7515DY, Captain Leroy Crator]. The following personnel would be the primary project participants: Janelle Fleming, Debby Boyce, Dean Anderson, Lee Moore, Terry Leonard, Berry Nash, Libby Eaton, and Leroy Crator. Janelle Fleming is a research scientist with UNC-Chapel Hill Institute of Marine Sciences and works closely with James Morris at NOAA. A researcher will be aboard the research vessel when research activities are being conducted.

Please contact me with any questions or concerns at (252) 269-0385 or Janelle.fleming@gmail.com. Thank you very much for your time.

Regards,

Janelle Fleming
ECARA Research Coordinator

Attachment: North Carolina Sea Grant Application