



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
<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/region/southeast>

F/SER25: FH

Mel Bell, Chair
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201
North Charleston, South Carolina 29405

Dear Mr. Bell:

NOAA Fisheries received a request from Dr. David Portnoy, Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi, to obtain an exempted fishing permit (EFP). If granted, the EFP would allow harvest of speckled hind in the federal waters of the South Atlantic. The samples would be used to assess speckled hind population structure, connectivity, and life history. The EFP would exempt select commercial fishermen from federal regulations prohibiting the harvest and possession of speckled hind in federal waters of the South Atlantic at 50 CFR 622.181(b)(3)(prohibited and limited harvest species). The EFP would be valid through August 31, 2024.

The applicant was awarded a grant to study speckled hind in the U.S. South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. The applicant acquired some of the needed samples from fishery independent surveys conducted by NOAA Fisheries and the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. Due to low encounter rates, additional samples were needed. The applicant requested, and was granted, an EFP from NOAA Fisheries on March 22, 2021, to retain up to 40 speckled hind per calendar year (up to 80 total for the EFP). That EFP expires on August 31, 2022. In the U.S. South Atlantic, only 11 of the 80 projected samples have been obtained to date, and only two from the current EFP. However, the applicant has continued to add fishermen to the current EFP to increase opportunities for sample collection.

The applicant proposes to collect speckled hind from select commercial fishermen who occasionally encounter speckled hind in the U.S. South Atlantic during routine fishing operations. This EFP would be identical to the one provided on March 22, 2021, and would extend the sampling timeframe to August 31, 2024. The applicant would be able to retain up to 40 speckled hind per year (up to 80 total for the EFP). Speckled hind are expected to be harvested by rod and reel in depths of 70-600 ft, and black sea bass pots in depths of 60-110 ft. A fin clip would be taken from harvested speckled hind and shipped to the Marine Genomics Laboratory at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi. Speckled hind carcasses would be shipped to the NOAA Fisheries Southeast Fisheries Science Center for otolith extraction. The results of the EFP would contribute to improved understanding of speckled hind population structure, connectivity, and life history in the U.S. South Atlantic. Because speckled hind would be harvested incidentally (during routine commercial fishing trips), no additional environmental impacts would occur through the issuance of the EFP.

For your review, please find enclosed the EFP application for this proposed activity. Please contact us should you have questions or concerns about issuance of this EFP. If you need additional information, please contact Frank Helies at (727) 824-5305.

Sincerely,

Andrew J. Strelcheck
Regional Administrator

cc: John Carmichael, Myra Brower

Enclosure

