



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:NM

John Carmichael
Executive Director
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive, Suite 201
North Charleston, South Carolina 29405

Dear Mr. Carmichael:

NOAA Fisheries has received a request from Ms. Rachel Kalisperis, South Carolina Aquarium, to obtain an exempted fishing permit (EFP). If granted, the EFP would allow harvest of marine species including snapper-grouper, Spanish mackerel, king mackerel, golden crab, dolphin, wahoo, Atlantic cobia, spiny lobster, and shrimp in federal waters off South Carolina and less frequently in federal waters off North Carolina (EFP Application, Appendix A). The purpose of the collections is to incorporate native species into educational exhibits at the South Carolina Aquarium in Charleston, South Carolina, and teach the public about stewardship and habitat preservation. This EFP would be valid from July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2027.

The EFP authorization would be issued under the procedures established at 50 C.F.R. § 600.745(b), and would exempt the described activities from regulations implementing the Fishery Management Plans for Snapper-Grouper, Coastal Migratory Pelagics, Dolphin and Wahoo, Golden Crab, Spiny Lobster, and Shrimp, found at 50 C.F.R. 622 Subparts I, J, L, M, Q, and R. The EFP would also exempt the described activities from Atlantic cobia regulations under the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act at 50 C.F.R. Part 697. Specimens would be collected for aquarium exhibits using vertical hook-and-line gear with artificial and natural baits, black sea bass pots, spiny lobster traps, golden crab traps, bait traps, minnow traps, octopus traps, hand nets, and dip nets. All attempts would be made to release all non-targeted bycatch species alive through utilization of venting and controlled ascent/descent procedures. No black sea bass pots, spiny lobster traps, and golden crab traps would be deployed from November 1 through April 30 to avoid interactions with North Atlantic right whales during their calving season. Bait traps, minnow traps, and octopus traps are expected to be deployed year-round, but these traps would not have lines with buoys at the surface. The South Carolina Aquarium states that it has been operating under an EFP since 1998 without any protected species interaction for over 20 years. A maximum of 1,436 fish and 455 invertebrates per year, with a total of 7,180 fish and 2,275 invertebrates over the 5-year period of the EFP are expected to be collected.

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 Nikhil Mehta at (727) 824-5305.

Sincerely,

Andrew J. Strelcheck
Regional Administrator

cc: Jack McGovern, Rick DeVictor, Monica Smit-Brunello
Enclosure

