

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

RIN 0648-XA847

Fisheries of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic; Reef Fish Fishery of the Gulf of Mexico; Exempted Fishing Permit

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of receipt of an application for an exempted fishing permit; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the receipt of an application for an exempted fishing permit (EFP) from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF). If granted, the EFP would authorize the applicant to collect and retain red snapper that would otherwise be prohibited from possession and retention. This study, to be conducted in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf), is intended to better document the age structure and life history of fish associated with offshore platforms and artificial reefs in Louisiana coastal waters.

DATES: Comments must be received no later than 5 p.m., eastern time, on June 22, 2012.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments on the application by any of the following methods:

- *Email:* 0648-
XA847.LDWF@noaa.gov. Include in the subject line of the email comment the following document identifier: ALDWF_EFP@.

• *Mail:* Steve Branstetter, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

The application and related documents are available for review upon written request to any of the above addresses.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steve Branstetter, 727-824-5305; email: Steve.Branstetter@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The EFP is requested under the authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*), and regulations at 50 CFR 600.745(b) concerning exempted fishing.

The described research is part of a new research program by LDWF. The research is intended to involve recreational fishermen in the collection of fundamental biological information of Gulf red snapper. The proposed

collection for scientific research involves activities that could otherwise be prohibited by regulations at 50 CFR part 622, as they pertain to reef fish managed by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council). The applicant requires authorization through the EFP to collect these Council-managed species that may be taken as part of the normal fishing activities of the recreational sector of the Gulf reef fish fishery. LDWF has requested an EFP from July through October 2012, to monitor red snapper caught during recreational fishing tournaments held in Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida subsequent to the closure of the 2012 recreational red snapper season. LDWF is requesting that selected participants, in as many as seven recreational fishing tournaments, be allowed to retain and tag the first red snapper caught during a fishing trip. Participants would also complete and submit a data sheet regarding other red snapper caught and released during the fishing trip. Fish collected under this EFP would be surrendered to LDWF personnel or other state fishery biologists, and sampled for length, weight, otoliths, and gonads. LDWF would be responsible for providing all data collected under the EFP to NMFS for use in the next stock assessment. The intent is to better document the age structure and life history of red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico. If approved, the EFP would authorize the take of approximately 1,600 red snapper during the five-month period. Such fish collected as biological samples would not be subject to seasonal closures or size limits.

NMFS finds this application warrants further consideration. Possible conditions the agency may impose on this permit, if it is indeed granted, include but are not limited to, a prohibition of conducting research within marine protected areas, marine sanctuaries, or special management zones, without additional authorization. A report on the research would be due at the end of the collection period, to be submitted to NMFS and reviewed by the Council.

A final decision on issuance of the EFP will depend on NMFS's review of public comments received on the application, consultations with the affected states, the Council, and the U.S. Coast Guard, as well as a determination that it is consistent with all applicable laws.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: May 17, 2012.

Carrie Selberg,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

RIN 0648-XC038

Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC); Public Meeting

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (Council) Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Committee and Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Advisory Panel will hold a public meeting.

DATES: The meeting will be held on June 8, 2012 from 9 a.m. until noon.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held via webinar with a physical listening station also available at the Council office, 800 N. State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901; telephone: (302) 674-2331. The webinar registration link is: <https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/126160849>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Christopher M. Moore Ph.D., Executive Director, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, 800 N. State Street, Suite 201, Dover, DE 19901; telephone: (302) 526-5255.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The primary purposes of the meeting are to review the alternatives for Amendment 14 to the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fishery Management Plan, review public comments received, and get input from the Advisory Panel. Public comment will be taken, but there is a written comment opportunity available through June 4 (http://www.mafmc.org/fmp/msb_files/msbAm14current.htm) and there will be an additional opportunity for public comment at the June Council meeting (agenda will be posted at www.mafmc.org).

Although non-emergency issues not contained in this agenda may come before this group for discussion, in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act), those issues may not be the subject of formal