



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
Southeast Regional Office  
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OCT 14 2008

F/SER24:PH

Dr. Richard Leard  
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council  
2203 North Lois Avenue  
Suite 1100  
Tampa, Florida 33607

Dear Dr. Leard:

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) requests the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) review the enclosed Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) request at the October 2008 Council meeting. The EFP proposal was submitted by the Gulf Fishermen's Association as part of a Cooperative Research Program project (Cooperative Agreement No. NA08NMF4540401). The EFP, if approved by the Council, would allow the applicant to have approved fishermen aboard commercial reef fish longline and vertical hook-and-line vessels retain reef fish that would be regulatory discards and provide these fish to NMFS personnel for length and life history information.

The primary purpose of this study is to provide detailed information and disposition of reef fish discards by the eastern Gulf of Mexico commercial reef fish fishery. This information would improve fishery stock assessment data for a group of species important to both recreational and commercial fishing interests, provide insight on a stock's resilience to fishing, and help refine estimates of long-term biological productivity of the stocks. Currently, these data are unavailable, and it is anticipated project results would yield valuable data within this fishery.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roy E. Crabtree".

Roy E. Crabtree, Ph.D.  
Regional Administrator

Enclosure

