



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
 NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
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F/SER24:SB

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

JAN 15 2010

Steve
 Dear ~~Dr. Bortone~~:

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service requests the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council review the enclosed Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) application at the February 2010 meeting. The EFP proposal was submitted by the Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries Foundation, Inc. (Foundation). The described research is part of two Cooperative Agreements (No. NA08NMF4330406 and No. NA09NMF4540135) awarded to the Foundation by NOAA Fisheries Service. The research is intended to involve commercial fishermen in the collection of fundamental fisheries information. Resource collection efforts support the development and evaluation of fisheries management and regulatory options. The EFP, if approved by both the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Councils, would allow Foundation observers aboard commercial shrimp vessels to retain as many as 500 specimens of federally-managed finfishes outside of the allowable harvest. Retention may be needed for extended onboard examination, later shoreside analyses or identification, or as documentation of quality assurance in the data collection process.

The goal of the research is to provide additional information on the catch, bycatch, discards, and the ability to reduce such bycatch and discards in the southeastern shrimp fishery. This information would improve catch and effort data in the shrimp fishery, as well as improve information used in stock assessments for a wide variety of federally-managed finfish that are important to both recreational and commercial fishing interests.

Sincerely,

Roy E. Crabtree, Ph.D.
 Regional Administrator

Enclosure

