

Atlantic HMS Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) Application

Exempted Fishing Program

- 1) One of the main purposes of this proposed purse seine Exempted Fishing Permit is to determine purse seine capability to catch its quota composed of legal size >73 inch bluefin tuna without the existing and unilateral arbitrary tolerance restriction of 15% by weight of total catch comprised of fish between 73 inches and under 81 inches. The General Category former 73 to 81 size restriction has been entirely eliminated while the Harpoon category maximum restriction on retention of 73 to 81 inch fish has been doubled by NMFS for biological and management reasons.
- 2) The purse seine vessel will operate only with 100% federal observer coverage.
- 3) Any bluefin tuna below the 73 inch minimum size will be counted against the vessels quota and similar to existing requirements for General, Harpoon and Pelagic Longline categories the fish will be released in a manner most likely to survive or released dead.
- 4) Scientists onboard the vessel or at the dock meeting the returning seine vessel will examine every bluefin in the catch for size, length and weight. Further, to the extent practical, scientists will remove from each fish any parts or organs useful for further scientific understanding and management of the fish. This includes retention of fish otoliths for aging and natal origin through isotope signatures and gonads for sexual maturity status of each fish.
- 5) Recently, the NMFS Southeast Fishery Science Lab announced their intention to examine genetic "close kinship" as a possible new index of abundance and collection of multiple "muscle samples" from seine fish could facilitate this research.
- 6) other material necessary for aging and genetic identification such as samples from the "dorsal spine" for comparison and contrast to the method of aging in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea.

An Exempted Fishing Permit for a purse seine vessel would clearly provide the fastest, and cheapest manner in which to collect numerous samples necessary for scientific examination and validation. Multiple samples could afford distribution to numerous fishery science labs interested in pursuing the critical biological issues necessary for effective, efficient and sustainable fisheries across the distribution range of this complex HMS species.

2) No

3) No

4) – 4 or more years

5) these activities will take place during the purse seine fishing season of July 15 (or earlier if deemed necessary by the primary scientists involved) through December 31 or as long as the Individual Bluefin Quota of the vessels remains uncaught. In this case, the [REDACTED] is in the unique position of having the capability of transferring quota from its sister vessels [REDACTED] by administrative notice to the Northeast Regional Office to the [REDACTED]

6) North Atlantic waters.

7) This EFP proposal does not rely on a capability to fish in any currently closed area.

8) Other gear specifically tuna purse seine gear.

9) Not Applicable

10) The number of research trips will be the number of trips necessary to catch the three Individual Bluefin Quotas under the newly implemented Amendment #7 to the 2006 Consolidated Atlantic Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan.

11) Atlantic bluefin tuna are the only intended species this EFP expects to interact with. Any other species will be released in a manner intended to provide the highest survival. After being encircled by the seine net, the bottom of the net is pursed or closed and then drawn back to the vessel for the fish to be brailled to the deck for limited processing prior to immersion in salted chilled water tanks. If unintentional mortality of a species occurs the plan would be to discard that species. Beyond the targeted bluefin catch, there is no intention of retaining incidentally caught species which is rare in purse seine operations for tuna.

12) Not Applicable

13) No protected species and/or marine mammals are expected to be encountered during this research.

14) There is no intention to keep any species for public display.

15) This EFP research will not require any federal funds for collection or distribution of the biological samples.

16) [REDACTED], Gulf of Maine Research Institute and any qualified scientists he identifies to assist his collection of samples.