

COUNCIL OPERATING PROCEDURE:
PROTOCOL FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION OF EXEMPTED FISHING PERMITS (EFPs)
FOR PACIFIC COAST GROUND FISH FISHERIES

DEFINITION

An exempted fishing permit (EFP) is a federal permit, issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service, which authorizes a vessel to engage in an activity that is otherwise prohibited by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act or other fishery regulations for the purpose of collecting limited experimental data. EFPs can be issued to federal or state agencies, marine fish commissions, or other entities, including individuals. An EFP applicant need not be the owner or operator of the vessel(s) for the EFP is requested [NMFS Report, April 2002].

PURPOSE

The specific objectives of a proposed exempted fishery may vary. The Pacific Fishery Management Council's fishery management plan (FMP) for West Coast groundfish stocks provides for EFPs to promote increased utilization of underutilized species, realize the expansion potential of the domestic groundfish fishery, and increase the harvest efficiency of the fishery consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the management goals of the FMP [PFMC West Coast Groundfish FMP, August 1990]. However, EFPs are commonly used to explore ways to reduce effort on depressed stocks, encourage innovation and efficiency in the fisheries, provide access to constrained stocks while directly measuring the bycatch associated with those fishing strategies, and to evaluate current and proposed management measures [GMT report, October 2002].

PROTOCOL

Submission

The Pacific Fishery Management Council and its advisory bodies (Groundfish Management Team [GMT] and Scientific and Statistical Committee [SSC]) should review EFP proposals prior to issuance; the GMT and SSC may provide comment on methodology and relevance to management data needs and make recommendations to the Council accordingly. The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel and the public may also comment on EFP proposals [NMFS Report, April 2002]. *Completed applications for EFPs from individuals or non-government agencies for Council consideration must be received by the Council for review, at least two weeks prior to the September Council meeting. Applications for EFPs from federal or state agencies must meet the briefing book deadline for the September Council meeting.*

Proposal Contents

EFP proposals must contain sufficient information for the Council to determine:

- There is adequate justification for an exemption to the regulations;
- The potential impacts of the exempted activity have been adequately identified; and
- The exempted activity would be expected to provide information useful to management and use of groundfish fishery resources. [GMT report, October 2002]

Therefore, applicants must submit a completed application in writing that includes, but is not limited to, the following information:

- Date of application
- Applicant's names, mailing addresses, and telephone numbers
- A statement of the purpose and goals of the experiment for which an EFP is needed, including a general description of the arrangements for the disposition of all species harvested under the EFP
- Valid justification explaining why issuance of an EFP is warranted

- A statement of whether the proposed experimental fishing has broader significance than the applicant's individual goals
- Number of vessels covered under the EFP
- A description of the species (target and incidental) to be harvested under the EFP and the amount(s) of such harvest necessary to conduct the experiment; this description should include harvest estimates of overfished species
- *A description of a mechanism, such as at-sea fishery monitoring, to ensure that the harvest limits for targeted and incidental species are not exceeded and are accurately accounted for*
- *A description of the proposed data collection and analysis methodology*
- For each vessel covered by the EFP, the approximate time(s) and place(s) fishing will take place, and the type, size, and amount of gear to be used
- The signature of the applicant *[PFMC West Coast Groundfish FMP, August 1990]*

NOTE: The GMT, SSC, and/or Council may request additional information necessary for their consideration.

Review and Approval

The GMT and SSC will review EFP proposals in September and make recommendations to the Council for action; the Council will consider those proposals for preliminary action. Final action on EFPs will occur at the November Council meeting. Only those EFP applications that were considered in September may be considered in November; EFP applications received after the September Council meeting for the following calendar year will not be considered.

EFP proposals must contain a mechanism, such as at-sea fishery monitoring, to ensure that the harvest limits for targeted and incidental species are not exceeded and are accurately accounted for. *Also, EFP proposals must include a description of the proposed data collection and analysis methodology used to measure whether the EFP objectives will be met.*

The Council will give priority consideration to those EFP applications that:

- Emphasize resource conservation and management with a focus on bycatch reduction
- Encourage full retention of fishery mortalities
- Involve data collection on fisheries stocks and/or habitat
- Encourage innovative gear modifications and/or development *[GMT report, October 2002]*

In its review, the GMT review will consider the following questions:

- Is the application complete?
- Is the EFP proposal consistent with the goals and objectives of the West Coast Groundfish FMP?
- Does the EFP account for fishery mortalities, by species?
- Are the harvest estimates of overfished species within the amounts set aside for EFP activities?
- Does the EFP meet one or more of the Council's priorities listed above?
- Is the EFP proposal compatible with the federal observer program effort?
- What infrastructure is in place to monitor, process data, and administer the EFP?
- *How will achievement of the EFP objectives be measured?*
- What is the funding source for at-sea monitoring?
- Has there been coordination with appropriate state and federal enforcement staff?

Other considerations:

- *Potential EFP participants (fishers and processors) who have violated past EFP provisions, have been convicted of a state or federal gross misdemeanor or felony of commercial fishery regulations within the last three years and/or for which there are documented fish receiving tickets that indicate misreported or under-reported groundfish landings may not be eligible to participate in EFPs. [GMT report, October 2002]*

Report Contents

The EFP applicant must present a preliminary report on the results of the EFP and the data collected (*including catch data*) to the GMT at the June Council meeting of the following year. A final written report on the results of the EFP and the data collected must be presented to the GMT, SSC, and the Council at the September Council meeting. This final report should include a summary of the work completed, an

analysis of the data collected, and conclusions and/or recommendations. *Timely presentation of results is required to determine whether future EFPs will be recommended.*