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November 19, 2025

MEMORANDUM

TO: N.C. Marine Fisheries Commission

FROM: Trish Murphey, Executive Assistant for Councils

SUBJECT: NC Division of Marine Fisheries (NCDMF) Application for a South Atlantic Exempted Fishing Permit.

Issue

North Carolina is one of four South Atlantic states applying for a South Atlantic Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to begin to test state management of Atlantic red snapper in federal waters starting in 2026.

Background

Recreational interest groups began engaging the South Atlantic states in 2024, asking for consideration of a state-led data collection and management approach for Atlantic red snapper, like what had evolved for the Gulf states. Because of this push, the four states began meeting to discuss potential paths forward, which resulted in a consensus to apply for EFPs that would allow each state to evaluate data collection approaches. Additionally, after discussion of state management at its September council meeting, the SAFMC initiated an amendment to delegate management of the recreational red snapper fishery to each South Atlantic state.

NCDMF's EFP application requests a two-month recreational season from July 1st to August 31st (MRIP wave four) where selected anglers and for-hire vessels will be allowed to possess one Atlantic red snapper per person per trip using only hook and line gear. During this time, the NCDMF will test an electronic data collection program created by Bluefin Data LLC, for licensed private recreational anglers. This same application will also be tested by South Carolina and Georgia state agencies using standardized data collection methods and will be cost effective for implementation. The focus of this and possible future EFP requests are to improve NC's ability to develop a defined Atlantic red snapper sampling frame, improve fishery-dependent recreational data collection, and to better understand angler behavior. The South Atlantic states will continue to coordinate with each other and the council to use the information collected through state EFPs to inform the development of the amendment.



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All participants will be listed as collectors on a NCDMF-held Scientific or Education Permit. The selection process and specific conditions are yet to be determined. However, all participants will be required to report to the NCDMF when making a red snapper trip. All private recreational anglers will be required to report their trip information through the electronic reporting application and for-hire captains will be required to report through either the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting program or through the Southeast Region Headboat Survey.

Objectives of the pilot study in addition to testing the reporting application are:

- Compare reporting results of landings and discards between the reporting application and MRIP.
- Compare daily fishing times, landings, and discards between mini seasons and the proposed 62-day season.
- Collect biological information of Atlantic red snapper off North Carolina through its Carcass Collection Program.
- Collect demographic, social, and economic data through surveys of private recreational fishermen fishing for Atlantic red snapper in North Carolina.

Applications from the four states were submitted to the Department of Commerce on November 10th. Once received and deemed complete, applications will be published in the Federal Register for public comment up to 45 days. Updates on these applications will be provided at the upcoming SAFMC December meeting in Kitty Hawk.