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Request for an Exempted Fishing Permit



Sarah Stephenson, NMFS-SERO Caribbean Branch
185th Caribbean Fishery Management Council Meeting
December 4-5, 2024

Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP)

- An EFP is required for any fishing that would otherwise be in violation of the Magnuson-Stevens Act or other fisheries laws or their implementing regulations, and is not considered part of an exempted educational activity.
- Request: Dr. Shervette and Jesus Rivera with the University of South Carolina is requesting an EFP to collect a maximum of 60 red hind from the Hind Bank Marine Conservation District (MCD) and the Red Hind Spawning Aggregation Area (Lang Bank) two days before and after the full moon in December 2024 (15th), January 2025 (12th), and February 2025 (13th).
 - [Cooperative Research Program 2024](#) funded project.
 - View application on the [Caribbean Exempted Fishing Permits webpage](#).



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Project Objectives

- The project seeks to address gaps in red hind demographics and life history, which were identified as research recommendations in the Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review 35 final report.
 - This information could provide current, region-specific information for upcoming red hind stock assessments.
- The project would also evaluate the effectiveness of the seasonal and area closures through replication of past collections and analysis of temporal trends related to size-at-age, sex ratios, and size/age frequency distributions for red hind during spawning events.
- By targeting red hind during the spawning aggregations, the project will collect data on larger-sized fish that currently are not available.



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Regulation Exemptions

- If granted, this EFP would exempt project participants from the Area and Seasonal closures regulations listed below.
 - [50 CFR 622.479\(a\)\(2\)](#) - Red hind spawning aggregation area east of St. Croix
 - (i) From December 1 through the last day of February, each year, fishing is prohibited in the red hind spawning aggregation area east of St. Croix.
 - (ii) Fishing with pots, traps, bottom longlines, gillnets, or trammel nets is prohibited year-round in the red hind spawning aggregation area east of St. Croix.
 - [50 CFR 622.514\(a\)\(2\)](#) - Hind Bank Marine Conservation District (MCD)
Fishing for any species and anchoring by fishing vessels is prohibited year-round in those parts of the Hind Bank MCD that are in the EEZ around St. Thomas and St. John.



Research Methods

- 60 red hind would be collected from each site; at 82-246 feet (25-75 meters).
- Once the 60 red hind are caught, fishing activities at the site would end.
- During each fishing day, the contracted commercial fishermen would use a maximum of 4 fishing rods, each with up to 3 hooks.
- All activities would occur in federal waters and while adrift (i.e., no anchoring would occur).
- All other fish caught would be returned to the water.
- Samples would be stored on ice and transported to field lab where lengths and weights would be measured and otoliths, gonads, eyes, muscles, stomachs, and fin clips collected.



Timeline and Permit Issuance

- Notice of the EFP application published in the *Federal Register* on November 13, 2024 ([89 FR 89616](#)).
 - Comment period open through December 9, 2024.
 - To comment: <https://www.regulations.gov/search?filter=noaa-nmfs-2024-0127>
- The EFP, if granted, would be valid from date of signature through March 1, 2025.
- EFP would include authorized applicants, exemptions, and conditions:
 - Specific fishing dates and number of red hind allowed for each management area.
 - Gear specifications (for example, hook-and-line only).
 - Permit must be onboard each vessel during each sampling event.
 - Reporting requirements that would be sent to SERO and SEFSC.
 - Other recommendations (for example, coordinate with overlapping projects).

Questions?



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