



Guidance Document for Council Review of EFP Applications for Forage Amendment EC Species

Council Meeting
December 13, 2023

Meeting Objectives

- Review revised document.
 - Incorporates recommendations from Oct. 2023 Council meeting.
 - Additional input from EOP AP and Committee.
- Approve document.



Forage Amendment Goal

Prohibit the development of new and expansion of existing directed commercial fisheries for unmanaged forage species until the Council has had an adequate opportunity to assess the scientific information relating to any new or expanded directed fisheries and consider potential impacts to existing fisheries, fishing communities, and the marine ecosystem.



CT Thomas

Forage Amendment Requirements

- 1,700 lb commercial possession limit in Mid-Atlantic federal waters for all EC species combined.
- EFP required as a first step towards considering allowing landings beyond 1,700 pounds.



Purpose of Document

- Establish a standard process for Council review of EFP applications for Forage Amendment EC species.
- Communicate the Council's priorities for EC species to prospective EFP applicants.
- Outline information needed by Council to inform their review of EFP applications.
- Does not modify or replace federal process.
- Not binding on NMFS.

Changes Requested by Council

- Re-framing as “guidance.”
- Ultimately only GARFO has the authority to approve/disapprove EFPs for Forage Amendment EC species.
- Council can request that EFP applicants follow Council review process.
- Council input can help inform GARFO’s decision.
- Council review can set the stage for future Council consideration of mgmt. changes that may be requested.

EOP Committee and AP Input

- General support for revisions.
 - 5 Committee members, 8 AP members.
- One AP member opposed the document.
 - Preferred that EFP applications be sent to the Council as a courtesy after they have been submitted to GARFO.
 - Council should review applications after GARFO announces they are complete and warrant further consideration.

EOP Committee and AP Input

- One AP member recommended GARFO issue guidance to EFP applicants.
 - Can proceed with or without Council review.
 - Council review especially important when ultimate goal is consideration of larger directed fishery.
- One Committee member provided additional edits regarding EFP reports.
 - No opposition expressed.

EFP Report Contents

- Description of all species caught
 - Including amounts and dispositions, landed or discarded.
- Description of the probable impacts
 - On fisheries, fishing communities, EFH, marine mammals, threatened and endangered species, and the marine ecosystem, based on the documented amounts of species caught, landed, or discarded.

EFP Report Contents

- Description of gear used, and any specific fishing strategy employed to target the desired species, as well as any gear modifications and fishing strategies used to reduce bycatch or env. impacts.
- Recommendations for revising the EFP to provide better information or modifying fishing activities to improve catch, reduce bycatch, or otherwise improve fishing efficiency.
- Conclusions regarding whether the fishing activities provide necessary information for determining the next steps.

EFP Reports

- Should be provided with applications that request renewal of EFPs.
- Should be submitted within 6 months.
 - As soon as possible when needed to support Council/GARFO review of an application for EFP renewal.



Change from Forage Amendment

- Forage Amendment: Council will review applications prior to GARFO.
- Proposed new process: Council and GARFO will work together on concurrent review.
- Change can be made without formal mgmt. action.
 - This part of amendment not in regulations.
 - Change aligns with intent of Forage Amendment.
 - Council review would take place before GARFO review/approval process is fully complete.

Comment Letter

- 11 organizations.
- Support updated document.
- Recommend Council approval during this meeting with no further revisions.

Questions/Discussion

- Objective: Approve revised document.

