minimum mesh size for the *Loligo* fishery. This exemption was requested to allow completion of the project’s remaining four research trips using the previous minimum mesh size of 1 7/8 in. (48 mm). A change to the nets used to conduct field sampling at this stage of the project would undermine data analysis in support of the project’s objectives. Therefore, NMFS is reissuing the EFP in support of the drop chain study to facilitate the completion of the research project.

The revised EFP includes an exemption from the *Loligo* Trimester III minimum mesh size of 2 1/8 in. (54 mm) at § 648.223(3). An exemption from the *Loligo* mesh size restriction will allow the completion of the project’s remaining research trips, using the previous minimum mesh size of 1 7/8 in. (48 mm). The exemption is within the scope and scale of the original approved EFP, and the overall impacts of research operations are unchanged from the initial review.

The applicants may request minor modifications and extensions to the EFP throughout the course of research. EFP modifications and extensions may be granted without further public notice if they are deemed essential to facilitate completion of the proposed research and result in only a minimal change in the scope or impacts of the initially approved EFP request.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.


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