

for finfish trawls and 2⁷/₈-inch (7.3 cm) stretch mesh for gillnets.

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(7) Land weakfish for commercial purposes caught in the EEZ in any state other than Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, or North Carolina.

4. Section 697.22 is revised to read as follows:

§ 697.22 Exempted fishing.

The Regional Administrator or Director may exempt any person or vessel from the requirements of this part for the conduct of exempted fishing beneficial to the management of the American lobster, weakfish, Atlantic striped bass, Atlantic sturgeon, or

horseshoe crab resource or fishery, pursuant to the provisions of § 600.745 of this chapter.

(a) The Regional Administrator or Director may not grant such exemption unless it is determined that the purpose, design, and administration of the exemption is consistent with the objectives of any applicable stock rebuilding program, the provisions of the Atlantic Coastal Act, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and other applicable law, and that granting the exemption will not:

(1) Have a detrimental effect on the American lobster, Atlantic striped bass, weakfish, Atlantic sturgeon, or horseshoe crab resource or fishery; or

(2) Create significant enforcement problems.

(b) Each vessel participating in any exempted fishing activity is subject to all provisions of this part, except those explicitly relating to the purpose and nature of the exemption. The exemption will be specified in a letter issued by the Regional Administrator or Director to each vessel participating in the exempted activity. This letter must be carried aboard the vessel seeking the benefit of such exemption. Exempted fishing activity shall be authorized pursuant to and consistent with § 600.745 of this chapter.

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