



**Testimony before the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Chad Hanson, Senior Policy Analyst, Pew Environment Group**

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RE: Experimental Fishing Permit Application

Good afternoon, Chairman Shipp and members of the Gulf Council. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Chad Hanson and I am a Policy Analyst for the Pew Environment Group's Campaign to End Overfishing in the Southeast.

Please allow me to address the application for an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to begin to investigate the performance of a new fish trap design called an "Excluding Fishing Device."

To assess the efficacy of any new trap design, rigorous scientific research would be required. We firmly believe in pursuing new scientific information in order to better inform fisheries management, and commend the effort to develop innovations such as gear modification to address bycatch.

In general, we believe that this type of pro-active response to management should be encouraged.

However, any pursuit of data to support use of this new trap design should be done systematically and objectively through independent scientific channels.

In addition, the issues related to enforcement, compliance, incidental catch, ghost-fishing and habitat damage would need to be thoroughly addressed and overcome.

The EFP application before the Council does not provide sufficient information regarding how the data collected would be evaluated, and it is unclear whether the design of the study, as proposed, could adequately address the suite of issues associated with this gear.

Thus, we believe it is inappropriate to issue this EFP at this time and in this form.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this issue, and we look forward to working with you and the Council to ensure sustainable fish populations in the Gulf of Mexico.