



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Shareholders' Alliance Statement on This Week's Fishery Management Actions

(Galveston, TX): In a flurry of action this week, both the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and the Washington DC office of Congressman Garret Graves (R-LA) offered a proposed slate of radical changes to fishery management in the Gulf of Mexico. The Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance (Shareholders' Alliance) – the largest organization of commercial snapper and grouper fishermen in the Gulf – want to take this opportunity to demonstrate our support for the viable and helpful solutions that were proposed and express our strong concerns with a number of controversial and harmful measures.

Introduced by Congressmen Garret Graves (R-LA), Gene Green (D-TX), Daniel Webster (R-FL) and Rob Wittman (R-VA), H.R. 2023 or the “Modernizing Recreational Fisheries Management Act of 2017” (Modern Fish Act) is a mixed bag with a name that veils the harm it will bring to commercial fisherman, commercial fishing jobs, and American seafood access.

The Shareholders' Alliance generally supports some provisions in the Modern Fish Act that aim to improve recreational data collection. More and better scientific partnerships – federal and state, public and private – as well as credible third party validations, help ensure the integrity of the data that managers use to make decisions. The more precise and accurate the data are, the more effective the management measures can be, which can improve fishery access for all fishermen. To that end, we appreciate the sponsors' attempts to address existing recreational data challenges in an effort to improve recreational fishing access.

However, there are a number of provisions in the Modern Fish Act that will add unnecessary restrictions and harm to commercial fishing businesses, and will roll back fishery management progress, including:

- Preventing commercial fishermen from using management tools even if the majority of fishermen support them.
- Forcing fishery managers to devote a portion of their limited bandwidth to nonstop debating of disruptive and controversial reallocation proposals that will neither significantly extend private angler fishing seasons nor solve the underlying angler fishery management problems.

- Adding red tape that restricts the ability of all fishermen from testing new and creative solutions to the problems in their fishery.
- Weakening measures that protect the fish stocks that we've built our businesses on.

We stand firm in our belief that commercial fishermen know how to run commercial fishing businesses better than politicians in Washington DC do. This is why we look forward to working with Congressional Members and Committees to balance the needs of commercial, recreational and charter fishermen by supporting efforts to improve recreational data collection and addressing our concerns with the harm that the Modern Fish Act will impose on commercial fishing businesses and seafood suppliers.

We agree that private recreational anglers need relief and that a "one-size-fits-all" approach isn't the most effective way to govern. That's why the Shareholders' Alliance applauds the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council) for taking strong action this week to allow Louisiana to manage its own private anglers and charter/for-hire fishermen, and develop management plans that meet the needs of these two sectors. By a vote of more than two-to-one, the Gulf Council supported the state of Louisiana's request for recreational state management out to 200 nautical miles.

The Shareholders' Alliance strongly supports this initiative because:

1. It does not harm commercial fishermen, commercial fishing jobs, or seafood suppliers.
2. It recognizes and maintains protections for the federal charter/for-hire fleet.
3. It allows sixteen Gulf state-appointed stakeholders to make these decisions.
4. It was thoroughly discussed and evaluated by private recreational anglers, charter/for hire fishermen, commercial fishermen, scientists, and managers at the Gulf Council in a public and transparent manner.
5. The process for developing this amendment is clear, and opportunities for continued public input are assured and identified well in advance.

In response to this achievement, the states of Alabama and Mississippi introduced similar proposals later that day. Both were approved by a majority of the Gulf Council. While we support these additional initiatives and appreciate the commercial fishing protections they offer, we remain concerned that Mississippi and Alabama did not articulate safeguards for the federal charter/for hire fleet as Louisiana did. We strongly encourage these states to address this concern with their federal charter/for hire fishermen.

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The Shareholders' Alliance is the largest organization of commercial snapper and grouper fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico. We work hard to ensure that our fisheries are sustainably managed so our fishing businesses can thrive and our fishing communities can exist for future generations. We are the harvesters that provide much of the American public with a reliable source of domestically-caught wild Gulf seafood, and we do this through a philosophy that sustainable seafood and profitable fishing businesses depend on healthy fish populations.

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