



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Gulf Fishermen Applaud Louisiana's Leadership and Responsibility**

(Galveston, TX): Fishermen throughout the Gulf of Mexico are praising the State of Louisiana for a series of strong decisions last week that have broken the deadlock of red snapper management in the Gulf of Mexico. The Louisiana Office of the Governor and the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries demonstrated their commitment to a sustainable and responsible fishery by opposing a fiscally irresponsible proposal and championing viable and responsible solutions for all three sectors of the Gulf's red snapper fishery – commercial fishermen, charter/for-hire fishermen, and private recreational anglers.

In a statement released on Wednesday, June 22, Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards and Secretary Charlie Melancon announced that “It would be fiscally irresponsible for the Department [of Wildlife and Fisheries] to support any mandate that would result in an unknown amount of fiscal burden placed on the State of Louisiana for the management of a single species of fish. The statement went on to confirm that “H.R. 3094 would not be a viable option for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.” H.R. 3094 is a piece of unfunded legislation proposed by Louisiana Congressman Garret Graves that would strip management of red snapper away from the stakeholder-driven regional fishery council, consolidate it into the hands of five Gulf state bureaucrats, create a loophole that would exempt management plans from critical conservation requirements, and eliminate up to 10% of the commercial red snapper fishery annually.

Commercial and charter fishermen throughout Louisiana and the rest of the Gulf of Mexico rejoiced in this groundbreaking decision. “We are extremely impressed at the leadership position Governor Edwards, Secretary Melancon, and the rest of the Department Staff have taken in opposing this unfunded mandate,” **said Steve Tomeny, commercial and charter fisherman from Port Fourchon, Louisiana.** “Our state leaders recognize that H.R. 3094 is a bad financial proposition for the State of Louisiana and its economy. Hopefully this, coupled with the commercial and charter fishing industry's strong opposition to this controversial piece of legislation, is enough to defeat this bad idea once and for all.”

“H.R. 3094 is widely opposed by commercial and charter fishermen from Louisiana and throughout the Gulf of Mexico,” **said Russell Underwood, a commercial fisherman whose boats land their fish in Leeville, Louisiana.** “Now that we're going to be stuck with the bill, this just reiterates that H.R. 3094 is bad for Louisiana and we need to move past it. We don't need or want this shoved down our throats - we all need to be working together through our state representatives on the Gulf Council to give all fishermen a voice, and to stand up for what's right for the fishermen and the resource. That's the American way.”

The effect of this important announcement was felt the next day as far away as Eastpoint, Florida where Florida fishermen were asking their own state fishery managers to show the same leadership that Louisiana's leaders did just 24 hours before. “We've been coming to the Florida Commission for a year asking them to support their fishermen by opposing H.R. 3094,” **said Jim Zurbrick, commercial fisherman from Steinhatchee, Florida.** “Florida saw that Louisiana couldn't support H.R. 3094 because

it was ‘fiscally irresponsible,’ and immediately ordered their staff to bring them a full report at their next meeting. I think they’re quickly realizing that it would be just as fiscally irresponsible for Florida to support H.R. 3094, and I expect they’ll withdraw their support at their next meeting. We have the largest population of fishermen with the smallest biomass, so Florida loses with H.R. 3094. We hope that Congressman Graves doesn’t add insult to injury by making Florida pay to lose.”

Meanwhile, at the Clearwater, Florida meeting of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council), Louisiana leadership continued to build momentum in their campaign to support charter fishermen and help put private recreational anglers on a path to solving the problems in their fishery. To do this, the Louisiana representatives on the Gulf Council initiated a management plan for private recreational anglers. “Even though this was one of Patrick’s first few Gulf Council meetings, he clearly understands that private anglers need help now – not sometime down the road,” said **Buddy Guindon, Executive Director of the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders’ Alliance – a proactive organization of commercial snapper and grouper fishermen with membership throughout the Gulf of Mexico, including Louisiana.** “We’ve entered a new era and I’m really impressed with what I’ve seen in such a short period of time – good financial decisions, good policy decisions, and good leadership qualities. We respect and support Patrick’s determination to do the right thing and fix the private angler component of this fishery now through the Gulf Council process by bringing smart fishermen together with supportive and committed State leaders.”

In another move to help private recreational anglers and despite strong objections from Texas and Mississippi members, Louisiana strongly backed a proposal that will convene an advisory panel of private recreational anglers to start coming up with ideas for how to better manage their fishery. **According to Wayne Werner, a commercial fisherman who offloads his fish in Leeville, Louisiana,** “All fishermen should be part of the decision-making process. Commercial fishermen have an advisory panel, the charter fishermen have an advisory panel, so it’s only fair that the private recreational fisherman have an advisory panel, too. It was pretty disappointing to see other Gulf States try to stop this, but it was good to see Louisiana stand up for itself and its fishermen.”

Louisiana’s representatives on the Gulf Council also supported their charter fleet by extending an industry-supported initiative to allow these fishermen to develop management plans that work for their businesses. “Without the State of Louisiana on our side, we would’ve lost all the gains we’ve made in the last year and a half extending our season, pleasing our customers, and building out stable business plans,” said **Shane Cantrell, Executive Director of the Charter Fisherman’s Association – an organization of charter fishermen with membership throughout the Gulf of Mexico, including Louisiana.** “Thank you for your support.”

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*The Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders’ Alliance is a non-profit organization that represents the interests of commercial reef fish fishermen and other stakeholders in the Gulf of Mexico. We work hard to maintain accountability and conservation-based management for our region’s fisheries for today and future generations. By working closely with regional managers, state agencies, and federal representatives, we strive to stabilize and improve fishery management to ensure that we can continue to provide the American public with a sustainable source of domestically-caught Gulf of Mexico seafood. Everything we do is founded in our belief that conservation and stewardship protect fish populations and fishermen’s businesses.*

**[www.shareholdersalliance.org](http://www.shareholdersalliance.org)**

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