

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Commercial Fishermen Throughout the US Oppose Gulf States Red Snapper Takeover**

(Galveston, TX): Commercial fishermen throughout the United States have stood up and opposed the plan by the Gulf of Mexico state managers to take over red snapper management and eliminate the commercial quota system.

“It’s incredible the response we’ve gotten,” said **Buddy Guindon, Executive Director of the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders’ Alliance based in Galveston, TX.** “From Alaska to Maine, California to South Carolina, our brother and sister commercial fishermen have united around this issue and see it for what it is – a precedent-setting backdoor means by the recreational lobby to reallocate this fishery, undermine federal laws, and take fish away from seafood consumers.”

Forty two commercial fishing organizations, representing thousands of commercial fishermen and tens of millions of pounds of commercially important seafood, signed onto a letter drafted by the Shareholders’ Alliance which states “The implications of such a takeover are far-reaching and set a dangerous precedent for our region and others - over 97% of the more than 300,000 million Americans get their access to fish and shellfish by purchasing it in restaurants, grocery stores, and fish markets that we supply. We cannot support this plan in the Gulf because we would not support it at home.”

“This isn’t just a Gulf issue, it has national implications,” said **John Pappalardo, CEO of the Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen’s Alliance based in Chatham, MA.** “We stand with the Gulf fishermen and oppose this dangerous plan that will destroy small American ‘mom and pop’ businesses.”

According to an announcement, representatives from the five Gulf States met in a closed-door off-the-books meeting in New Orleans where they developed a plan to take over management of red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico and eliminate the commercial individual fishing quota (IFQ) system. The management responsibility, currently held by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and National Marine Fisheries Service, would be turned over to a yet-to-be-developed group called the Gulf States Red Snapper Management Authority, and would consist of 5 individuals, one from each Gulf State, that propose to operate outside of U.S. federal fisheries laws and sustainability policies. Each Gulf State would be responsible for management of their own waters out to 200 nautical miles, and would be in charge of creating the science and data to use for their management. Funding for this program would be siphoned from existing federal programs.

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We write to you today as a unified group of commercial fishing organizations and seafood suppliers from throughout the United States that are concerned with what we see unfolding in the Gulf of Mexico. Specifically, we strongly oppose the push by the five Gulf states to take possession of the red snapper fishery through a legislative exemption to the Magnuson Stevens Act. This action sets a dangerous precedent for fishermen like us throughout the United States and the conservation measures we need to protect our fisheries.

According to the most recent report of fisheries economics of the United States, commercial fishermen in the U.S. harvested 9.6 billion pounds of finfish and shellfish in 2012, earning \$5.1 billion for their catch. Additionally, commercial fishing contributes 1.3 million jobs and \$141 billion in total sales to the economy of the U.S. The Gulf states' ploy directly threatens the seafood industry and our economic contribution to the nation by removing accountability to the Magnuson Stevens Act, failing to protect the commercial fishery, eliminating public involvement in the regulatory process, and prioritizing recreational fishing interests above all others.

The Gulf states' fishery directors hold five seats on the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, the body that oversees the implementation of the Magnuson Stevens Act. Time and time again these same individuals have voted against the interests of the commercial fishery. That, combined with their refusal to explain how they would manage the commercial fishery, and the admittance of at least one major private angler organization that the goal is to shut down the commercial red snapper fishery, should give every member of Congress pause – it certainly raises concern with us.

The Magnuson Stevens Act requires fishermen to be accountable for what they catch and for fishery management plans to prioritize conservation measures. Without these protections, healthy fisheries can return to an overfished state and fisheries that need protection may not get it. This will hurt fishing businesses like ours, cause the loss of our fishing and shoreside jobs, and harm our fishing communities that rely on healthy stocks to survive. American seafood consumers will feel the sting of this impact as their healthy and sustainable seafood choices become limited and replaced by cheap imports or are fraudulently mislabeled.

The nation's supply of Gulf of Mexico red snapper will be threatened if the Gulf States take over the commercial red snapper fishery, exempt themselves from the Magnuson Stevens Act, and turn over this fishery to the recreational sector. The implications of such a takeover are far-reaching and set a dangerous precedent for our region and others - over 97% of the more than 300,000 million Americans get their access to fish and shellfish by purchasing it in restaurants, grocery stores, and fish markets that we supply. We cannot support this plan in the Gulf because we would not support it at home.

Thank you for your consideration. We appreciate your help in protecting commercial fishermen, the seafood supply chain, and seafood consumers throughout the United States by opposing this ill-advised, precedent-setting plan.

**Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers**

Mark Gleason, Executive Director  
Seattle, Washington

**Alaska Independent Fishermen's Marketing Association**

David Harsila, President  
Seattle, Washington

**Alaska Independent Tendermens Association**

Lisa Terry, Executive Director  
Petersburg, Alaska

**Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association**

Linda Behnken, Executive Director  
Sitka, Alaska

**Alaska Marine Conservation Council**

Kelly Harrell, Executive Director  
Anchorage, Alaska

**Alaska Trollers Association**

Dale Kelley, Executive Director  
Juneau, Alaska

**Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association**

Bob Krueger, Executive Director  
Kodiak, Alaska

**American Bluefin Tuna Association**

Rich Ruais, Executive Director  
Norwell, Massachusetts

**Associated Fisheries of Maine**

Maggie Raymond, Executive Director  
South Berwick, Maine

**At Sea Processors Association**

Stephanie Madsen, Executive Director  
Seattle, Washington

**California Sea Urchin Commission**

Dave Goldenberg, Executive Director  
Folsom, California

**California Wetfish Producers Association**

Diane Pleschner-Steele, Executive Director  
Buellton, California

**Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance**

John Pappalardo, CEO  
Chatham, Massachusetts

**Central Coast Seafood Marketing Association**

Rob Seitz, Vice President  
Morro Bay, California

**Commercial Fishermen of Santa Barbara**

Chris Voss, President  
Santa Barbara, California

**Fish for America**

Jim Zurbrick, Managing Director  
Steinhatchee, Florida

**Fishing Vessel Owners' Association**

Per Odegaard, President  
Seattle, Washington

**Florida Keys Commercial Fishermen's Association**

Bill Kelly, Executive Director  
Marathon, Florida

**Fort Bragg Groundfish Association**

Michelle Norvell, Executive Director  
Fort Bragg, California

**Georges Bank Cod Fixed Gear Sector**

Jim Nash, President  
Chatham, Massachusetts

**Gulf Coast Professional Fishermen**

Wayne Werner, Co-Founder  
Alachua, Florida

**Gulf Fishermen's Association**

Glen Brooks, President  
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**Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance**

Bubba Cochran, President  
Galveston, Texas

**Gulf Wild**

Jason DeLaCruz, President  
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**Half Moon Bay Groundfish Marketing Association**

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Half Moon Bay, California

**Half Moon Bay Seafood Marketing Association**

Geoff Bettencourt, Vice President  
Half Moon Bay, California

**Maine Coast Fishermen's Association**

Ben Martens, Executive Director  
Topsham, Maine

**Maine Lobstermen's Association**

Patrice McCarron, Executive Director  
Kennebunk, Maine

**Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association**

Beth Casoni, Executive Director  
Scituate, Massachusetts

**Midwater Trawlers Cooperative**

Heather Mann, Executive Director  
Newport, Oregon

**North Pacific Fisheries Association**

Malcolm Milne, President  
Homer, Alaska

**Northeast Fishery Sector 11**

Jamie Hayward, President  
New Hampshire

**Northeast Seafood Coalition**

Jackie Odell, Executive Director  
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**Penobscot East Resource Center**

Kyle Molton, Policy Director  
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**Purse Seine Vessel Owner's Association**

Bob Kehoe, Executive Director  
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**Rhode Island Commercial Fishermen's Association**

Christopher Brown, Executive Director  
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**Small Boat Commercial Salmon Fishermen's Association**

Don Marshall, President  
Grass Valley, California

**South Atlantic Fishermen's Association**

Matt Ruby, President  
Charleston, South Carolina

**Southeast Alaska Fishermen's Alliance**

Kathy Hansen, Executive Director  
Juneau, Alaska

**Southern Offshore Fishing Association**

Bob Spaeth, Executive Director  
Madeira Beach, Florida

**United Catcher Boats**

Brent Paine, Executive Director  
Seattle, Washington

**United Cook Inlet Drift Association**

David Martin, President  
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