

Official Statement of the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholder's Alliance

State Management of the Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Fishery

The Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance (Shareholders' Alliance) and the commercial fishermen and women we represent stand strong in supporting the sustainable federal management of our nation's commercial red snapper fishery. We are able to build stable, long-term business plans; we live within sustainable limits; and we can provide the American seafood consumer with sustainable, fresh, Gulf of Mexico red snapper. The commercial red snapper management plan is working.

That's why we cannot support any legislative attempt to strip the commercial red snapper fishery away from federal managers and turn it over to the Gulf states. This plan, developed by the fishery directors of the five Gulf states in a secret backdoor meeting without any fishermen allowed in the room, threatens to eliminate the commercial red snapper fishery and the tens of thousands of jobs it supports in order to bring fresh red snapper to your plates.

Our federal fisheries law, the Magnuson-Stevens Conservation and Management Act (MSA), requires that sustainable fishing limits be identified and adhered to, conservation be promoted and that unhealthy fish stocks be rebuilt to healthy levels. It is these protections that have helped bring red snapper back to some of the highest levels in recent history. Turning the commercial red snapper fishery over to the Gulf states through an act of legislation will allow them to undermine our federal fisheries law and sidestep these conservation protections. Over forty commercial fishing organizations from throughout the Nation, representing thousands of commercial fishermen and tens of millions of pounds of commercially important seafood, support us as we work to protect our businesses and consumer access to red snapper.

Legislating state management, whether in the form of Congressman Graves' proposed amendment to the MSA reauthorization (H.R. 1335), Congressman Graves' stand-alone amendment, Senator Vitter's "Gulf States Red Snapper Management Authority" Act (S. 105), or any other similar acts of lawmaking, is the wrong answer for fish and fishermen in the Gulf. We have an existing process for developing fishery solutions in the Gulf of Mexico and that's done with a Congressionally-approved, stakeholder-driven, transparent Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council). In fact, the Gulf Council is working on a state management plan right now, and the five Gulf states fishery directors are members of this Gulf Council. Let's create regulations where they're intended to be created – through a transparent, public, and accountable process; not behind closed doors and then imposed by politicians.

If state management is the right solution for private anglers, it should be established under federal law, promote conservation, and refrain from destabilizing our commercial businesses. Helping private recreational red snapper fishermen doesn't have to come at the expense of hurting hard working commercial fishermen and our families.

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

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