



Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance

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Gulf Commercial Fishermen: Florida Fisheries Bill Is a 'Good Faith Step in the Right Direction'

The Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance today issued the following statement in response to introduction of the *Florida Fisheries Improvement Act* (S.1748) by Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL):

The Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance appreciates Senator Rubio's genuine commitment to work toward real solutions for all fishermen in the Gulf. The Florida Fisheries Improvement Act proposes a number of welcome improvements that will address some of the ongoing challenges in the Gulf, including improvements to the stock assessment process, increased transparency in the management process and more timely critical relief in response to fishery disasters. We also strongly support the Senator's commitment to ensuring that the makeup of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council is balanced and

does not lean heavily toward one user group over another.

We welcome the opportunity to work with Senator Rubio to address the concerns we have with a small number of provisions in the bill, including measures that would jeopardize our nation's successful core system of annual catch limits, especially in response to actions taken by other countries on our shared resources. We should base our policies and conservation measures on what is best for our nation's fisheries and fishermen, and we should understand the impacts this provision will have on all species harvested by Florida fishermen.

Additionally, we continue to have concerns with any measures that would effectively require the Gulf Council to continuously engage in what have always been controversial and disruptive allocation debates. The Gulf Council should retain the flexibility to decide when and how to have these conversations; they should not be mandated by Congress.

The Florida Fisheries Improvement Act is a good faith step in the right direction, and we look forward to working with Senator Rubio and others on real solutions to the Gulf's challenges.

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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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