



Local solutions are best for local issues

By James Bruce

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I've been a commercial fisherman since the 1980s, and I have seen the red snapper fishery change a great deal in that time. At one point red snapper were so scarce that we had a hard time finding any. Now they're everywhere.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act has brought this fishery back and now all fishermen are benefiting from it. Credit is also due to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, as well as scientists in Mississippi and at National Marine Fisheries Service.

Though the red snapper fishery is more sustainable than in years past, proposed bills in Congress, such as S. 1520 (the Modern Fish Act), could potentially undo the good work achieved over the last four decades. I understand private anglers are frustrated by incredibly short federal snapper seasons, but congressional bills that could undermine science and harm a business I have built from the ground up, are not the solution.

I support local solutions to local problems, and the Exempted Fishing Permit the Department of Marine Resources has applied for is a good first step to improving the situation for recreational anglers without harming commercial fishermen like me. I applaud MDMR for excluding the charter-for-hire industry from the EFP as they requested, and for their work on Tales and Scales as a way to increase accountability in the recreational sector.

I look forward to the Gulf Council meeting in Gulfport next week, April 16-20, where we can talk more about local solutions.

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