



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** May 24, 2018

*Gulf States Open 2018 Red Snapper Seasons for Private Anglers*

The Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance today issued the following statement on the start of the private angler red snapper seasons in the Gulf of Mexico under the state-run Exempted Fishing Permits:

With the recent approval of exempted fishing permits (EFPs) by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, private anglers throughout the Gulf of Mexico will see some of their red snapper seasons commence this week. The Shareholders' Alliance has always supported the EFP process because it takes fishermen's creative ideas and puts them in the hands of regional managers to implement. Critical to the success of the EFPs, however, are meaningful accountability measures as well as accurate and timely catch monitoring systems. These EFPs, if implemented with real-time data collection, could prevent overfishing, while at the same time could allow increased and more flexible access for the private angler sector. This would help private anglers without hurting commercial fishermen. The use of NOAA-certified self-reporting tools such as the State of Louisiana's LA Creel Survey, and mandatory catch reporting would help improve data collection, reduce uncertainty, and ultimately increase sustainable access to the Gulf's public fishery resources. Our core belief is that fisheries management should be founded on strong science and individual accountability, as supported by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, and these EFPs are an encouraging step in that direction for the private angler sector.

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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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