



January 2007

Mr. Peter Hood
NOAA Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office
263 13th Ave South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
727 824-5308 fax

Dear Mr. Hood:

As a recreational fisherman, I have very serious concerns about NMFS issuing a proposed rule to reduce the 2007 red snapper total allowable catch (TAC) to 6.5 million pounds and to implement a 2 fish per person daily bag limit. In August, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council decided to delay setting a 2007 red snapper TAC until more information becomes available to fisheries managers in the next red snapper assessment, scheduled for January of 2007, and I fully support this action. Fishermen and scientists alike feel strongly that the red snapper stock is greatly underestimated based on the tremendous numbers of juveniles found around areas not sampled by NMFS surveys, the massive illegal and uncounted red snapper landings, and the drastic reduction in red snapper bycatch in the domestic shrimp fishery. Collectively, this underestimation makes a TAC reduction unnecessary. And yet, NMFS is posturing to over rule the Council's best judgment and implement highly restrictive measures. I, along with the entire recreational fishing community, have great difficulty understanding why NMFS would implement an extremely restrictive TAC and recreational regulations knowing that a more informed decision could be made in a few months time.

Overfishing and regulations have effectively made the recreational red snapper for-hire sector extremely unstable. A 6.5 million pound TAC, combined with a 2 fish per person daily bag limit, will cripple the for-hire sector and be the final blow that will permanently tie many boats to the dock to rust. The recreational red snapper fishery is innately linked to the Gulf's tourism industry and socioeconomic wellbeing; both of which will deteriorate without an intact and functioning for-hire sector. For private recreational anglers, a 2 fish bag limit is hardly worth taking the time or expense to target red snapper, which will result in significant losses to marinas, tackle stores, bait distributors, boat builders, and fuel docks.

The recreational red snapper fishery is valued at over \$8 billion, but the social benefit to all Gulf coastal communities is beyond valuation. In short, I believe the recreational red snapper fishery is far too important for NMFS to make management decisions without a complete understanding of the red snapper stock. Therefore, I strongly suggest that you delay NMFS' implementation of red snapper specifications until the 2007 stock assessment is available.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature

Print Name

Print Address

Print Address

I FISH ♦ I VOTE