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RFA GULF ALERT REGARDING 'SECTOR SEPARATION' PLAN
Council Accepting Online Comments On 'Divide & Conquer' Mechanism

(6/18/2012) The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council) is now accepting public comment on a variety of fishery management issues, including reef fish allocation, gray triggerfish annual catch limits and annual catch targets, the shallow water grouper closure, and sector separation mechanisms under Reef Fish Amendment 39.

The Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) and its Forgotten Coast Chapter (RFA-FC) chairman stand opposed to efforts to divide and conquer the recreational fishing community into smaller portions. As RFA-FC Chairman Capt. Tom Adams of Mexico Beach, FL explains, the sector separation plan stands as a precursor to a privatized fishery under catch share mechanisms.

"We believe maintaining an open fishery with fair and equitable regulations that sustain the fish and the fishermen is a better method of fisheries management," Capt. Adams said, adding "we believe management needs to abandon their efforts to promote catch shares and sector separation and focus their efforts and funding on improved stock assessments with more appropriate modeling that will account for the substantial growth of a fishery like red snapper."

While some charter captains have come out in favor of sector separation mechanisms which would break the recreational fish allocations into private and professional ownership, others like Mexico Beach's Capt. Chip Blackburn say they are "furious" over the issue of dividing the community. "As a charter fisherman with federal permits and almost thirty years in the business this blatant attempt at divide and conquer is disgusting," Capt. Blackburn is listed as stating at the Gulf Council website. "I as are all my customers totally opposed to sector separation and catch shares."

Capt. Adams and the RFA-FC is encouraging Gulf anglers to stand up in opposition to the sector separation plan proposed by the Gulf Council, where discussions are underway this week in Tampa, FL on possible implementation. "If you fish for a regulated salt water fish in the Gulf, you are a stakeholder and you have a say in the outcome of the regulations," said Adams who tells anglers and fellow business owners to take a few moments to state their personal opinion on this matter by clicking here. Adams said it can be as simple as typing "I am against implementing Sector Separation for the Gulf of Mexico."

RFA members are asked to pass this along to their fishing buddies, as comments are needed this week. Comments from RFA-FC and all Florida members can also be sent to the following Florida representatives on the Gulf Council:

Jessica McCawley (jessica.mccawley@myfwc.com)

Bob Gill (bgillbgill@embarqmail.com)

Larry Abele (labele@fsu.edu)

Dr. Pam Dana (pamdana@yahoo.com)

To Give Public Comment:

www.gulfcouncil.org/resources/Public%20Testimony.php

To Read Public Comment:

www.gulfcouncil.org/fishery_management_plans/Public%20Comment/RF_Amendment_39-Sector_Separation/Comments.pdf