



June 18, 2018

Frank Helies
Southeast Regional Office
National Marine Fisheries Service
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

RE: FB18-032 – Proposed opening of a limited red snapper fishery in the South Atlantic - Strongly Support

Dear Mr. Helies:

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, I want to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed limited opening of the recreational and commercial red snapper fishery in South Atlantic federal waters. We supported the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's action on Amendment 43 to reopen a limited season for red snapper, and we urge your swift approval of Amendment 43's proposed rule.

Since 2014, the complete closure of the red snapper fishery in federal waters of the South Atlantic has hindered the ability to conduct effective stock assessments under the current quota management model due to the lack of fishery-dependent data. As the population continues to rebuild, the high estimates of red snapper dead discards in other targeted fisheries will continue to rise. Opening weekend-only mini seasons will allow some of the red snapper discard mortality to be converted to harvest, while also allowing for the collection of much needed data for adequate stock assessments.

With the NOAA Fisheries determination that the limited harvest likely will not result in overfishing, nor will the proposed harvest levels hinder the continued rebuilding of the stock, we urge you to approve the proposed rule for Amendment 43 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region.

Sincerely,

Chris Horton
Fisheries Program Director