January 5, 2022

Ms. Jerri G. Smitko
Chair
Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission
2000 Quail Drive
Baton Rouge, LA 70808

Re: Menhaden Buffer Zones Notice of Intent

Dear Chairwoman Smitko and Members of the Commission:

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation (CSF), we write in support of amending the Menhaden Buffer Zones Notice of Intent (NOI) from the proposed one-quarter (1/4) mile exclusion of commercial fishing activities for menhaden to a minimum of one-half (1/2) mile.

Founded in 1989, CSF’s mission is to work with Congress, governors, and state legislatures to protect and advance hunting, angling, recreational shooting, and trapping. CSF has a strong track record in Louisiana, working with the Louisiana Legislative Sportsmen’s Caucus and conservation partners to protect and advance Louisiana’s sporting heritage by supporting pro-sportsmen legislation and state fish and wildlife management objectives. We offer the following comments based on our experience working on fisheries policy for more than 30 years.

Recreational fishing for Louisiana’s inshore and nearshore species such as trout, southern flounder and redfish are extremely popular with Louisiana anglers, and these fisheries provide a significant economic benefit to the state’s economy. Persistent concerns about the proximity of the industrial purse seines near the shoreline and the incidental bycatch of non-target species, as well as growing concerns about the potential impacts the large “pogie boats” are having on the bottom substrate in shallow water, warrants a minimal buffer zone of ½ mile from the shoreline that prohibits nearshore extraction activities. This reasonable regulatory approach would not impact the commercial harvest quota for menhaden, but it will offer some protection for Louisiana’s extremely valuable nearshore marine habitat.

Louisiana is known as the “Sportsman’s Paradise” for a reason. Tens of thousands of anglers, both from within and beyond Louisiana, travel to the state’s coast each year to spend time with their family and friends fishing the Louisiana marsh and nearshore waters to fill coolers and a chance to catch a fish of a
lifetime. While excluding menhaden harvest within ½ mile of the shoreline will not limit the ability of
the menhaden industry to harvest the fishery, it will ensure that Louisiana remains the “Sportsmen’s
Paradise” by protecting the state’s valuable estuarine resources. For this reason, we strongly urge you to
amend the NOI by increasing the minimum exclusion buffer distance from ¼ mile to ½ mile.

Thank you for your consideration and the opportunity to provide comments on this important issue for
Louisiana anglers.

Sincerely,

Chris Horton
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