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Committee:
Ways and Means

Subcommittees:
Property Tax, Chairman
Healthcare

Ad Hoc Committee:
Economic Development and Utility
Modernization

House of Representatives
State of South Carolina

July 11, 2024

Andy Strelcheck – Regional Administrator
NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region Office
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg FL 33701

Dear Mr. Strelcheck:

I write on behalf of offshore fishermen and related businesses in my community and state concerned about the severe weather forecast for the Red Snapper season scheduled for tomorrow.

I've attached the National Weather Service Small Craft Advisory that is up for the coast of southern North Carolina tomorrow calling for "South winds 15 to 20 knots with gusts up to 25 knots and seas 5 to 7 ft expected."

Additionally, I've attached the National Weather Service forecast for tomorrow beyond 20 miles offshore of northern South Carolina calling for "SE winds 20 to 30 knots, becoming S. Seas 6 to 10 ft."

According to the interim rule for the 2024 Red Snapper season the "date is subject to change if NOAA Fisheries determines a Small Craft Advisory will exist or is projected to exist."

Additionally, the Fishery Bulletin announcing the Red Snapper season states that "the U.S. Coast Guard and recreational fishermen have expressed concerns for safety-at-sea during short, derby-style fishing seasons" and that the fishing date change provision "is intended to reduce the likelihood that recreational fishermen will fish during adverse weather conditions."

I'm asking you to change the July 12th Red Snapper season, at least off the Carolinas, based on the adverse weather forecast and the concerns for the safety of fishermen.

The Red Snapper season, which is way too short, has very significant economic impacts on my community and the entire coast of South Carolina. We simply want to be able to fish for and land Red Snapper on a date in which the offshore weather is safe to fish.

Again, I ask you to change the Red Snapper season date.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lee Hewitt".

Rep. Lee Hewitt