



February 5, 2025

The Honorable Chip Campsen
Chairman

South Carolina Senate Fish, Game and Forestry Committee

Dear Chairman Campsen and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the American Sportfishing Association, the Center for Sportfishing Policy, the Coastal Conservation Association, and the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, we write to express our strong support for S. 219, which would establish a state-waters season in the snapper-grouper complex in South Carolina waters. Recreational fishing is the backbone of South Carolina's outdoor economy, and the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources is in the best position to effectively balance recreational fishing opportunity while ensuring healthy, sustainable fishery resources in the Palmetto State's waters.

Recreational fishing contributes more than \$148 billion annually to the U.S. economy and supports 828,000 American jobs. In South Carolina alone, the \$6.5 billion boating and fishing industry supports 27,100 jobs; creating immense economic impact, and fostering a longstanding tradition of outdoor recreation. By giving the state authority over the management of all fish in the snapper-grouper complex found in state waters, this legislation provides much-needed consistency while empowering South Carolinians to enjoy and preserve marine resources responsibly.

South Carolina stands as a national leader in the boating and fishing industries, housing three of the world's largest fishing tackle manufacturers and 28 boat makers. The state is uniquely positioned to lead by example in advancing fisheries policies that prioritize state-level management over federal mismanagement. The continued struggles by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to generate reliable recreational catch and effort data are well known. However, NMFS has reached a new low, proposing in January to implement a ban on all bottom fishing for three months to "protect" a rapidly recovering South Atlantic red snapper population, despite the federal agency acknowledging the fishery is being sustainably harvested. Such federal maladministration of public fishery resources highlights the urgent need for state-driven

management to counter the negative consequences of federal overregulation fueled by a flawed data collection process.

S. 219 takes a comprehensive approach by incorporating 55 species of the snapper-grouper complex into state-level management. This proactive measure ensures South Carolina can balance conservation efforts with expanded recreational access, promoting economic growth while safeguarding vital marine ecosystems. By passing this legislation, South Carolina can serve as a model for other states seeking to assert state management that better aligns with the needs of their angling and boating communities and the reality of abundant fisheries resources in their coastal waters.

We commend the Committee for its dedication to enhancing the fishing opportunities and traditions that are so vital to South Carolina and the nation. We urge the swift passage of this legislation to ensure the continued growth and sustainability of recreational fishing, not just in South Carolina but across the region.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to supporting the outdoor heritage that benefits millions of Americans.

Sincerely,

American Sportfishing Association
Center for Sportfishing Policy
Coastal Conservation Association
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation