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January 10, 2019

Emily Muehlstein
Public Information Officer
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
4107 West Spruce Street, Suite 200
Tampa, FL 33607

Re: State Management of Recreational Red Snapper - (Reef Fish Amendment 50)

Dear Ms. Muehlstein,

Coastal Conservation Association applauds the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and the Gulf states for their efforts on Amendment 50 - State Management of Recreational Red Snapper. We commend the state fish and wildlife agencies of the Gulf Coast not only for their willingness to take on this task but for developing a comprehensive plan for how they will cooperatively manage this resource going forward and provide greater access to it for their citizens.

We have been encouraged by the effort put forth in this amendment by the state fisheries directors to recognize and address the unique aspects of the recreational red snapper fishery in different regions of the Gulf. One-size-fits-all federal management of red snapper has proven to be functionally unworkable, with Gulf-wide recreational seasons decreasing to just three days prior to the implementation of the current exempted fishing permit that allows the states to assume management of the private recreational fishery for 2018-19. With support from Congressmen, governors, and anglers, the state directors agreed to take on management of red snapper on a more permanent basis not only because they saw no other viable options, but because they knew they could do a better job. And they have.

State fisheries directors in the Gulf have a long history of successfully managing marine resources and they are proving once again that wild natural resource management works best when it is local and flexible. The states understand how to best manage the fishery to meet the needs of everyone in the state, including each state's charter/for-hire fleet and the anglers who use those boats to access this public resource. In Action 1.1 of Amendment 50, we support Alternative 4, allowing every Gulf state the opportunity to decide if it will manage both private boat anglers and those utilizing the state's charter fleet. CCA believes the states will ultimately deliver a more robust season for all recreational anglers, regardless of whether they fish from their own boats or on for-hire vessels.

Emily Muehlstein

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Finally, we encourage the states to avoid repeating the mistakes of the federal fishery management system and instead plan to continuously evaluate their management of the recreational sector to take into account evolving conditions and the health of the red snapper biomass off each state. Active, hands-on resource management combined with the states' enhanced recreational data collection systems will create management regimes that are timely, adaptable and based on the latest information.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Amendment 50. CCA looks forward to working with the Gulf states to create a functional management system for recreational anglers in the red snapper fishery that will serve as a model for other regions and species.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Bird". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the "Regards," text.

Bill Bird, Chairman
CCA National Government Relations Committee