



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance Opposes Gulf States Red Snapper Takeover

(Washington, DC): The House Committee on Natural Resources today advanced H.R. 3094 (the Gulf States Red Snapper Management Act) despite overwhelming opposition from the hard-working fishermen that will be directly harmed by this bill.

According to **Bubba Cochrane, commercial fisherman from Galveston, Texas and the President of the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance**, "Commercial red snapper fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico do not support this bill. A vast majority of charter fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico do not support this bill. Major commercial and charter fishing industry group in the Gulf and throughout the nation do not support this bill. This unfunded mandate is being forced on us against our will and without our consent. This is just one more example of the federal government bullying its way into my business. Why does a Congressman from Louisiana who sits at a desk in Washington DC think he knows more about running my commercial fishing business than I do?"

Initiated by a handful of special interest groups in a closed-door meeting in Louisiana that fishermen were not allowed to attend, H.R. 3094 would roll back 40 years of fishery management progress made since the U.S. began protecting its fisheries from overfishing by foreign nations. Through a campaign of misinformation and political rhetoric, H.R.3094 is being sold as a "states rights solution" when, in fact, the opposite is true.

"We urge our Congressional leaders to not be fooled by the sham that Congressman Graves is promoting – H.R. 3094 does not give the Gulf States more control of red snapper," said **David Walker, commercial fisherman from Andalusia, Alabama**. "I am a commercial fishermen and I am also a member of the Gulf Council. Under the Magnuson Act, 16 of the 17 members of the Gulf Council are approved by the Governors of the Gulf States. 11 of those 16 members represent the interests of recreational, charter and commercial fishermen (like myself), as well as fisheries scientists. H.R.3094 eliminates these stakeholders like myself – someone whose commercial fishing business will be directly impacted by H.R. 3094 - from the decision-making process. It takes away our voice and our representation, instead consolidating management power into the hands of three State bureaucrats to decide our fate. That is *increasing* government control, not relaxing it."

In addition to rolling back progress the charter fleet has made on extending their fishing season in a sustainable manner and opening the door for the commercial red snapper fishery to be eliminated in less than 10 years, H.R. 3094 is an unfunded mandate imposed by Congress.

“Louisiana shouldn’t have to pay for the other Gulf States’ red snapper management programs,” said **Steve Tomeny, charter fisherman from Port Fourchon, Louisiana.** “Our previous governor has left us in a financial debacle, are we are in no position to go from paying to manage 9 miles to paying to manage an additional 191 miles into the Gulf.”

Opposition to H.R. 3094 isn’t limited to just fishermen and fishing businesses in the Gulf. Over forty commercial fishing organizations from Alaska to Maine to the Gulf have signed onto a letter opposing this plan because of the precedent it would set for their regions.

“If Congress passes H.R. 3094, it’s setting a dangerous precedent for fishermen in every region of the United States,” said **Eric Brazer, Deputy Director of the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders’ Alliance.** “From the pollock and halibut fishermen in Alaska to the cod fishermen in Maine and Massachusetts, your fishing and charter businesses will be put at risk when rogue state bureaucrats go to strip you from the protections you have under the Magnuson Act and force this plan on you against your will. We want to thank the coastal Congressmen and women from other regions that already recognize this and have expressed their opposition to this reckless, precedent-setting scheme.”

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The Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders’ Alliance is a non-profit organization that represents the interests of commercial reef fish fishermen and other stakeholders in the Gulf of Mexico. We work hard to maintain accountability and conservation-based management for our region’s fisheries for today and future generations. By working closely with regional managers, state agencies, and federal representatives, we strive to stabilize and improve fishery management to ensure that we can continue to provide the American public with a sustainable source of domestically-caught Gulf of Mexico seafood. Everything we do is founded in our belief that conservation and stewardship protect fish populations and fishermen’s businesses.

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