



Fellow CCA Members;

As the date quickly approaches for the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council meeting in Stuart, FL later this month, we are pleased to share with you a statement resulting from the CCA SAFMC committee meeting held earlier this week. This news release calls on the SAFMC to take an approach on the red snapper fishery that is practical and logical. It also states that a closure of our coast to bottom fishing is not up for consideration until all other methods of helping the stock recover have been investigated, tried and failed.

CCA GA will continue to work with CCA National in an effort to make sure that Georgia's marine resources are kept healthy and are around for future generations to enjoy.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Harry S. Lowe".

Harry S. Lowe
CCA GA
State Chairman

CCA Calls for Balanced Approach to Red Snapper Crisis

Unprecedented fisheries disaster in South Atlantic needs calculated response

In late 2006, Congress passed a significantly strengthened Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Management and Conservation Act, the overriding piece of legislation that guides federal fisheries management. Among other progressive provisions, the new law required managers to end overfishing by 2010. Only a year later, a stock assessment for South Atlantic red snapper, the first modern stock assessment ever done on the species, was released and proclaimed red snapper undergoing severe overfishing and so grossly overfished that it was instantly a full-blown crisis discovered right under managers' noses.

Now those two events are colliding and recreational anglers from North Carolina to Florida are caught squarely in the middle.

"This is a perfect storm for fisheries management, and the system is clearly not designed to handle this type of unforeseen and unforeseeable situation," said Richen Brame, Atlantic States Fisheries Director for Coastal Conservation Association (CCA). "If the science on red snapper is correct, then managers need to act. However, we believe that the measures that would be implemented for a stock that had been willfully mismanaged for 40 years should not be the same as those implemented for a stock such as this that has been ignored for 40 years and suddenly appears on the radar in a critically depressed condition."

As a result, CCA is calling on the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council to take a calculated approach to red snapper to mitigate the impact on recreational angling to the greatest extent possible, including:

- Further review of the existing science on red snapper to confirm the status of the stock;
- Additional research to fill critical gaps in researchers' knowledge of the species for management;
- While complete closure of any fishery should be the means of a last resort for any species, if upon further review and research it appears necessary for red snapper, then the fisheries for all other bottom species should remain open;
- Additional federal funding for the development of better release practices to reduce red snapper release mortality;
- When the stock is recovered, it should be managed as a purely recreational fishery;
- Any proposal to close all bottom fishing will be opposed by CCA unless all other options have been thoroughly exhausted and such closures comply with specific criteria outlined in the Magnuson-Stevens Act, including timelines for reopening, periodic research and assessment requirements, and minimum size designations that are no larger than that needed to achieve the rebuilding objectives for red snapper.

"We need a scalpel, not a sledge hammer to manage this species. Massive bottom closures just do not fit the unique circumstances of this extraordinary case," said Brame. "Anglers are willing to do their part and accept extensive regulations to keep marine resources healthy whenever necessary, but any proposals to close all bottom fishing should be the management tool of absolute last resort."

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