

The Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Lutnick:

On behalf of the recreational fishing industry, congratulations on your appointment as U.S. Secretary of Commerce.

The undersigned businesses write in opposition to the large fishing area closure proposed by NOAA Fisheries on behalf of the previous Secretary of Commerce in Amendment 59 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic. This area closure, which would prohibit recreational angling for 55 species of reef fish from December – February each year off a large portion of the Florida Atlantic coast, will have detrimental long-term impacts on coastal communities in the Southeast, small businesses, and the wider recreational fishing industry.

NOAA Fisheries is proposing this closure to protect red snapper. However, the South Atlantic red snapper population continues to grow and has recovered nearly 20 years ahead of schedule. Both scientists and anglers agree that the fishery is more abundant now than seen in decades. Even NOAA Fisheries acknowledges in Amendment 59 that South Atlantic red snapper are no longer overfished and should no longer be considered to be undergoing overfishing. Simply put, the onerous area closure proposed in Amendment 59 is not necessary to successfully rebuild red snapper.

Also concerning is that NOAA Fisheries relied on notoriously inaccurate data from their Marine Recreational Information Program – Fishing Effort Survey (MRIP-FES) as the basis for this proposed closure. However, a recent study by NOAA Fisheries on MRIP-FES revealed that MRIP-FES estimates may be off by 30-40%. Managing the red snapper fishery using this questionable data as proposed by NOAA Fisheries will unnecessarily hurt the recreational fishing community, especially considering efforts to collect better data on red snapper are underway and due to be included in a red snapper stock assessment that began last fall.

Unfortunately, this overreaching closure would also have negative long-term impacts on fisheries conservation efforts. Excise taxes collected on the sale of sportfishing equipment and marine fuels contribute millions of dollars to the Sport Fish Restoration Grant program which awards funding back to states and territories to improve public fishing and boating access, habitat restoration and fisheries research. A closure of this magnitude will undoubtedly cause fishing tackle sales to plummet and leave anglers with little incentive to buy fuel for offshore fishing trips, resulting in less funding for critical fisheries management efforts and worsening the

experience for recreational anglers forced to endure the burden of these reduced conservation activities.

In your authority as Secretary of Commerce, we ask that you reject the area closure proposed in Amendment 59. Rather than implement broad fishing closures that will harm recreational fishing businesses with little conservation gains, we ask you to consider ways that access to red snapper harvest can be improved while promoting conservation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Active Manufacturing Corp
Spring Lake, MI

AFTCO
Santa Ana, CA

American Fishing Wire
Coatesville, PA

American Sportfishing Association
Alexandria, VA

Anglers Resource
Foley, AL

Avid Boats
Amory, MS

Blue Island Digital LLC
Orlando, FL

Boaters Exchange
New Smyrna Beach, FL

BoatUS
Springfield, VA

Bonefish & Tarpon Trust
Miami, FL

Boone Bait Company
Winter Park, FL

Brunswick Corporation
Mettawa, IL

Butler Marine
Beaufort, SC

Center for Sportfishing Policy
Baton Rouge, LA

Chaparral and Robalo Boats
Nashville, GA

Crook and Crook Inc.
Miami, FL

Daiwa Corporation
Foothill Ranch, CA

DL Ventures LLC
Lexington, SC

Don Coffey Company
Orlando, FL

Engel Coolers
Jupiter, FL

Everglades Boats
Edgewater, FL

Farwest Sports, Inc.
Fife, WA

FIA Insurance
Northridge, CA

FISH307 LLC
Lake George, NY

Fishing Tackle Retailer
Enterprise, AL

FishNFX
Shavertown, PA

FishUSA, Inc.
Fairview, PA

FJ Neil Company, Inc.
Lindenhurst, NY

Garmin International
Olathe, KS

Gemlux
Jacksonville, FL

Grady-White Boats, Inc.
Greenville, NC

Half Hitch Tackle
Panama City, FL

Hook & Tackle
Miami, FL

International Game Fish Association
Dania Beach, FL

J-Squared Consultants, Inc.
Hustonville, KY

JL Marine Systems Inc.
Tampa, FL

Johnson Outdoors
Eufaula, AL

KOBO Labs LLC
Houston, TX

Major League Fishing
Benton, KY

**Marine Retailers Association of
the Americas**
Minneapolis, MN

**Mason Tackle/Ed Cumings/
Fishing Tackle Grab Bag**
Otisville, MI

Missile Baits
Salem, VA

Morton & Associates
Tehachapi, CA

Mount Dora Boating Center
Mount Dora, FL

**National Marine Manufacturers
Association**
Washington, DC

**National Professional Anglers
Association**
Bemidji, MN

Okuma Fishing Tackle
Ontario, CA

On The Water Media
East Falmouth, MA

OneWater Marine
Buford, GA

Owner American Corporation
Costa Mesa, CA

Pacific Catch
Auburn, CA

**Parker Business
Planning, Inc.**
Orlando, FL

Pelagic Inc
Costa Mesa, CA

PRADCO
Fort Smith, AR

Rapala
Minnetonka, MN

Reel Angler Network
Oxnard, CA

ReelView Fishing, Inc.
Charlestown, MA

Release Marine
Savannah, GA

Sadler Point Marina, Inc.
Jacksonville, FL

Sea Clear Power
Cherokee, AL

Seaworx Fishing
Jacksonville, FL

Seven Enterprises LLC
Charleston, SC

**Shimano North America
Fishing**
Ladson, SC

**Smith's Consumer
Products, Inc.**
Hot Springs, AR

Southwick Associates, Inc.
Fernandina Beach, FL

Spawn Fly Fish
Ilwaco, WA

Spellmans Marine, Inc.
Hampton Bays, NY

**Sportsman Boats
Manufacturing, Inc**
Summerville, SC

Suzuki Marine USA, LLC
Tampa, FL

Teak Isle Manufacturing
Ocoee, FL

**Texas Fish & Game
Publishing Co. LLC**
Spring, TX

TFO Holdings, LLC Grand
Prairie, TX

Top Brass Tackle
Starkville, MS

TTI-Blakemore
Wetumpka, AL

Vectorply Corporation
Phenix City, AL

Wired2fish.com
Grand Rapids, MN

**Z-Man Fishing Products,
Inc.**
Ladson, SC