

# Stop Grouper/Snapper Closures!

Several of our readers and advertising partners have suggested we provide a form letter that many anglers could copy, fill out, sign and mail in an effort to do their part to let their Congressional representatives and other elected officials know they are opposed to grouper and snapper area and season closures being proposed by NOAA and the National Marine Fisheries Service through the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic fishery management councils. Feel free to use the draft letter below as a guide, add your own thoughts, facts and/or feelings and go to [www.thomas.loc.gov](http://www.thomas.loc.gov) to get the contact information for your senator and representative. Florida Senator Bill Nelson is in a key position, as he serves on the Senate Commerce Committee, but your letter should also be sent to your U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative, governor's office and NOAA's Dr. Jane Lubchenco.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
To: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, ST ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear: \_\_\_\_\_:

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is about to implement an interim rule which will close the red snapper fishery to all users. In addition the NMFS has pressured the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council to develop proposed rules that will severely reduced the allowed harvest of grouper and other reef fish, create area closures and reduce fishing seasons due in part to the possibility of red snapper discard mortality.

All of these actions are based on fatally flawed recreational data from the Marine Recreational Fishing Statistical Survey (MRFSS), questionable fishery computer models and ignoring sound science from sources outside of the NMFS.

These overly restrictive and excessive actions will have devastating impacts on the Florida economy, local fishing communities, the recreational and commercial fisheries that sustain those communities and related support businesses.

Anecdotal testimony from long-time and knowledgeable participants in the fisheries and sound outside science clearly provide a different scenario of the status of reef fish off both the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic coast.

This information has been provided to NOAA and the NMFS, but has thus far been ignored. I am respectfully requesting your intervention into this matter to help prevent these excessive regulations from being implemented.

The proposed saltwater fishing closures will not only seriously harm local fishing communities; they will also do great economic and social harm to the states of North and South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. The proposed excessive regulations are also coming at the time of the worst economic disaster this country has ever seen.

There is much economic data from various sources that clearly show the impact of saltwater fishing, both recreational and commercial, has on our economy.

According to the "National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation" more than 2.77 million fishing participants over the age of 16 spent over \$4.4 billion on fishing in Florida in 2006, helping support over 75,068 jobs.

The economic impact of complete fishing closures for the harvest of grouper, snapper or other reef fish on Florida's Atlantic or Gulf coasts will have a long-term and devastating impact to our economy.

The state and local taxes generated by the sale of fishing-related goods totaled over \$441 million in 2006-07 alone – when over 1.15 million fishing licenses were sold.

While the economic and social impacts are extremely important, the fact that a wealth of historical and real world information provided to the NMFS has been completely ignored is cause for serious concern as to the process and data being used by NMFS to manage our fisheries.

Data from outside scientists and biologists indicates different conditions of the fish stocks in question. There has been much information presented and discussed that clearly indicates there is a problem with the way recreational fishery harvest and effort data is collected and calculated.

At a minimum, the current management processes and proposed closures should be halted and all information should be seriously considered and evaluated before such draconian measures are put into effect.

I agree that our natural marine resources need to be properly managed, but not through the use of "fatally-flawed" data taken from an outdated survey system that was not designed to be used for this purpose.

This is why your help is necessary in order to prevent the destruction of our economy, our favorite recreational activity and the careers of those who depend on Florida's soon-to-be-lost designation as "The Fishing Capital of the World."

Again, I respectfully request that you intervene in this matter and take a fresh look at the system to ensure that the best possible management – based on accurate and sound data and science – will prevail.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, ST ZIP Code: \_\_\_\_\_