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(Original Signature of Member)

118TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

**H. R.** \_\_\_\_\_

To provide that the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shall not issue an interim or final rule that includes an area closure in the South Atlantic for species managed under the Snapper-Grouper Fishery Management Plan until the South Atlantic Great Red Snapper Count study is complete and the data related to that study is integrated into the stock assessment.

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**IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Mr. RUTHERFORD introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

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**A BILL**

To provide that the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shall not issue an interim or final rule that includes an area closure in the South Atlantic for species managed under the Snapper-Grouper Fishery Management Plan until the South Atlantic Great Red Snapper Count study is complete and the data related to that study is integrated into the stock assessment.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Red Snapper Act”.

3 **SEC. 2. CONDITIONS FOR RULES RELATED TO CERTAIN**  
4 **AREA CLOSURES.**

5 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

6 (1) Fishing is a major economic driver in the  
7 South Atlantic. In Florida alone, recreational an-  
8 glers provide \$14,000,000,000 in economic output  
9 and support 119,000 jobs.

10 (2) Red snapper is a highly prized and sought  
11 after reef fish by both recreational and commercial  
12 fishermen.

13 (3) The 6-day recreational red snapper season  
14 in 2018 added \$13,000,000 to the gross domestic  
15 product of the South Atlantic region.

16 (4) For the last 10 years, fishery managers  
17 have successfully been working to rebuild the red  
18 snapper stock in the South Atlantic. There is cur-  
19 rently record high abundance and strong recruit-  
20 ment within the stock.

21 (5) This record abundance has led to increased  
22 out-of-season encounters and discards which is driv-  
23 ing red snapper mortality.

24 (6) Despite these increased discards, it is the  
25 overriding opinion of the South Atlantic Fishery  
26 Management Council’s Snapper Grouper Advisory

1 Panel that based on members' collective on-the-water  
2 experience, the red snapper fishery is recovered.

3 (7) However, options for future consideration to  
4 reduce out-of-season encounters and red snapper  
5 mortalities include shorter seasons and broad area  
6 closures for the snapper-grouper fishery in the South  
7 Atlantic.

8 (8) The State of Florida is concerned with the  
9 economic implications of area closures for the South  
10 Atlantic snapper-grouper recreational fishery.

11 (9) \$5,100,000 has been invested in inde-  
12 pendent survey data over the last three fiscal years,  
13 including \$3,300,000 for the South Atlantic Great  
14 Red Snapper Count to estimate the number of red  
15 snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*) in the South At-  
16 lantic waters from North Carolina to Florida.

17 (10) The National Marine Fisheries Service  
18 should incorporate data from this survey into the  
19 National Marine Fisheries Service stock assessments  
20 as expeditiously as possible to better inform fishery  
21 management decisions.

22 (b) CONDITION ON ISSUANCE OF RULE.—The Ad-  
23 ministrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Ad-  
24 ministration shall not issue an interim or final rule that  
25 includes an area closure in the South Atlantic for species

1 managed under the Snapper-Grouper Fishery Manage-  
2 ment Plan until—

3           (1) the South Atlantic Great Red Snapper  
4       Count study is complete; and

5           (2) the data related to that study is integrated  
6       into the upcoming South Atlantic red snapper re-  
7       search track and operational stock assessment.