

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0904

June 12, 2018

Frank Helies
Southeast Regional Office, NMFS
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

Mr. Helies:

As the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) considers Amendment 43, which has already received approval by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC), I am writing in support of your expeditious approval and implementation of a 2018 red snapper harvest season.

The recreational saltwater fishing industry in Florida supports approximately 115,000 jobs. My congressional district in Northeast Florida includes many coastal communities along the Atlantic that rely on healthy, sustainable fisheries for their livelihood. However, since 2010, red snapper harvests have been limited or prohibited all together. These closures have hurt tourism, seafood sales, charter businesses, marine manufacturers, and the many jobs that depend on stable access to our red snapper fishery.

I was very pleased last year to see the approval of a shortened red snapper season, and I am even more pleased that the SAFMC approved Amendment 43 to allow even greater access to our red snapper fishery in 2018. In addition to the economic benefit of opening this fishery, allowing a catch also provides much needed data to conduct a more accurate stock assessment – one that includes improved reporting on discard mortality and harvest/encounter rates that are of primary importance to properly assess this data-poor fishery.

It is my hope that NMFS will approve Amendment 43 and announce a 2018 red snapper season quickly, so that businesses, visitors and anglers may plan for when they will have access to this crucial fishery.

Thank you for your work to rebuild the red snapper population in the South Atlantic, and I look forward to working together to achieve reliable access to a sustainable, healthy red snapper fishery. As you know very well, it is of the utmost importance to my district and our entire state.

Sincerely,



John H. Rutherford
Member of Congress