

October 20, 2008

Mr. Glenn Martin, Chairman
Recreational Red Snapper Advisory Panel
Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
3018 U.S. Highway 301 North
Suite 1000
Tampa, FL 33610-2266

RE: A new direction for the for-hire red snapper sector

Dear Mr. Martin:

Increasing numbers of fishermen in the for-hire sector have concluded that we can no longer stand by and watch our access to the recreational red snapper fishery collapse, and with it, the years of investment each and every one of us has poured into our industry. A history of a decreasing TAC and increasingly confounding regulations now, coupled with the drastic downturn in the economy, means we struggle daily just to keep our small businesses afloat. According to our politicians and community leaders, these small businesses are the engine of the national economy and are a key economic component in our coastal communities.

In order for our for-hire businesses to survive, we need a new management philosophy which allows us to better serve our customers, count the fish we catch, and build equity in our businesses. At the same time, we want to conserve and continue to grow the stock biomass. The first step towards this goal is to request the AP recommend to the Gulf Council options which will allow the for-hire sector to be identified as its own sector and allocated a share of the recreational quota. While we fall under the "recreational sector" umbrella for fisheries management purposes, we approach fishing from a unique perspective. We are professional fishermen and we would like the opportunity to implement regulations that give us the ability to stabilize and run profitable businesses.

We feel the immediate implementation of regulations calling for sector separation and the implementation of a vessel monitoring system and electronic logbooks will allow for accountability and responsibility in our sector. The data that these tools can provide will give fisheries biologists an unprecedented and entirely new data set: very specific scientific information (likely real-time) that can be used to make timely and accurate management decisions.

This is not the time for political posturing and lengthy discussions, even more regulations, and another year of struggling to fish for less. We don't want handouts. We want to save the red snapper fishery in a cooperative management environment which will also re-energize our small business in this sour economy. The time for action is now.

Sincerely,

Bill Andrew
F/V Seemole Wind
PANAMA CITY Bch FL

