

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 28, 2016

Kathryn Sullivan, Ph.D.
Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Administrator Sullivan:

We write in response to the announcement that the 2016 Gulf of Mexico red snapper fishing season will be shorter than in years past. This is of great concern to our home state of Florida, and to the businesses and anglers that benefit from access to this valuable fishery.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) recent announcement that the Gulf of Mexico 2016 red snapper season will be limited to only nine days for recreational fishermen and 46 days for charter fishermen is concerning. Reports from the Gulf that red snapper stocks continue to rise are difficult to reconcile with your decision to shorten the recreational season. This decision, coupled with the expected decision that NOAA will keep the South Atlantic closed for another season, is incredibly troubling.

As we have also raised in the past, setting a rigid fishing season of consecutive days unnecessarily puts anglers in harm's way. Florida, and the Gulf region, can experience strong storms in the summer months. Allowing more flexibility in the season to accommodate dangerous weather would help fishermen avoid hazardous conditions.

The industries and communities in Florida that are impacted by the red snapper fishery are numerous and far reaching. As such, we respectfully urge you to use all available data to ensure our fishermen are afforded the maximum amount of time on the water, and with the flexibility required to ensure Americans are safe to enjoy this time honored activity.

Respectfully,



Marco Rubio
United States Senator



Bill Nelson
United States Senator