

February 3, 2012

Mr. David Cupka
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive
Suite 201
Charleston, SC 29405

Dear Chairman Cupka:

I am writing to you regarding the possibility of establishing a series of well thought out and strategically located marine spawning reserves specifically dedicated to protecting certain snapper/grouper species, including Warsaw grouper and speckled hind, when and where they are most vulnerable to overfishing--during spawning periods on known spawning sites.

This is a complex undertaking and to do it properly the first time around will require much more expertise than either the snapper/grouper AP or the Council alone can contribute to the process. What I would like to propose for your consideration are several regional working groups--all with local knowledge of the particular region they represent. These groups should be comprised of a diverse group of individuals--such as biologists (NMFS/NOAA, State, others), USGS personnel, commercial/recreational fishermen, NGO's and snapper/grouper AP members--all offering their knowledge and experience regarding a particular region or area of expertise.

This is similar to how the successful Tortugas 2000 working group was formed and operated. I was part of this working group and believe we can replicate this process and be successful in establishing a series of world-class marine spawning reserves in the South Atlantic.

Sincerely,

Don DeMaria
Snapper Grouper Advisory Panel Chairman