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September 4, 2026

Ms. Jessica McCawley, Marine Fisheries Management Director
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)
620 South Meridian Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600

Ms. McCawley,

During the August 2026 meeting in Biloxi, Mississippi, the Gulf Council (Council) was made aware of a proposed rule being considered by FWC to establish harvest regulations for cownose rays. The Council was presented with information that, due to the low reproductive life history of cownose rays, they are particularly vulnerable to overharvest. The Council is aware of your intention to establish recreational and commercial bag limits in addition to stipulating allowable gear and methods of harvest. The purpose of this letter is to communicate to your office that the Council has no immediate intent to recommend managing cownose rays in federal waters. The Council continues to support and looks forward to working collaboratively with the state of Florida in managing marine species in both federal and state waters.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kesley Banks, Chair
Gulf Council

CC: Council Members / Council Staff / Andy Strelcheck / Frank Helies / Clay Porch, Ph.D./
John Walter, Ph.D.