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Subject: SAFMC Meeting Public Comments

March 2014 SAFMC Meeting Public Comments

Please take the time to read these comments regarding some important issues the council should be and is considering.

It is important for us to learn from successes and failures in our own fisheries and others. One notable success has been on the west coast with fishermen's voluntary use of Descending Devices to greatly increase survival rates of fish suffering from barotrauma. The success has been so great that the Pacific Fishery Management Council will be considering reducing discard mortality allocations this month for several species with a similar life history and anatomy of many deepwater species off our coast. Promoting the use of Descending Devices would be a great way to collect data on and protect Warsaw Grouper and Speckled Hind without closing any more traditional fishing grounds. Descending Device use is also a solution that could allow fishermen to keep some of the 500,000+ pounds of Red Snapper currently being allocated to dead discards every year. Using these devices should return some of the 100,000+ pounds of our annual Gag Grouper Total Allowable Catch being allocated to dead discards. Most of this tragic waste of our resources is easily avoidable by simply managing quotas to avoid extended closures and releasing illegal fish so they have the best chance of survival. The vast majority of west coast fishermen were willing to use Descending Devices once they learned how effective and easy to use they are. Higher quotas will be a great reward for doing the right thing. This west coast success could be replicated in our commercial and recreational fisheries by taking these three simple steps.

1. Establish a South Atlantic Recreational Reef Fish Permit or work with states to include a box that fishermen can check on the fishing license application saying they bottom fish in federal waters. This will define the universe of anglers while providing contact info.

2. Request or require all recreational and commercial fishermen to have an approved Descending Device when bottom fishing in federal waters.
3. Set up a reporting system for fishermen to record what species and how many they released with Descending Devices each trip.

Here are some links to information about Descending Device use in deepwater Pacific fisheries similar to ours.

http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/D5b_SUP_GMT_POWERPOINT_APR2013BB.pdf

http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/D5b_SUP_ODFW_APR2013BB.pdf

http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/D5b_SUP_WDFW_APR2013BB.pdf

http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/D5b_SUP_CDFW_APR2013BB.pdf

<http://nwsportsmanmag.com/headlines/oregons-salty-dogs-getting-a-bottomfish-descender-in-the-mail/>

http://www.newportnewstimes.com/v2_news_articles.php?heading=0&story_id=39315&page=72

<http://www.mailtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20130531/LIFE/305310302>

I hope everyone will take the time to check out these links to important information about positive solutions that reward responsible fishermen for doing something simple to help their fisheries.

I would also like to comment on Amendment 29. PLEASE manage our commercial Gray Triggerfish quota with split seasons aligned with Vermilion Snapper and By-catch Allowances that avoid total closures and Regulatory Discards. PLEASE keep in mind that By-catch Allowances are NOT intended to continue a targeted fishery, but rather to avoid closures and waste.

Finally, I ask the council to table any amendments like RA17 that could negatively impact our freedom to fish until after the Visioning Project is completed.

Thank you,

Chris McCaffity

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