



December 2, 2010

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

David Cupka
Chairman, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
P.O. Box 12753
Charleston, SC 29422

RE: South Atlantic Fishery Management Council Amendment 17 A

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Chairman
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Managing fish and wildlife resources for their long-term well-being and the benefit of people.

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Dear Chairman Cupka:

On behalf of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), I urge you to remove the large-area closure off of northeast Florida that is a feature of Amendment 17A approved by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council). The large-area closure would prohibit the harvest and possession of 73 species of snapper and grouper that are under federal fishery management. At the FWC meeting today in Weston, Florida, the Commission expressed its strong desire to remove the large-area closure from federal regulations. We believe the most recent assessment reflects a continuing improvement in red snapper stocks, and we strongly believe that implementing the large-area closure should be re-evaluated in light of that new information. The large-area closure would have a serious economic impact to Florida's vital fishing industry, and we believe the benefits of taking such impacts into account will do much to restore good will and support among fishermen. We believe the red snapper fishery is improving and will continuously improve with the prohibition of directed harvest recently implemented. We sincerely believe this action will help restore the confidence of fishermen in the challenging federal management process that your Council faces.

Sincerely,

Rodney Barreto
Chairman

mr/ap/jm

cc: Commissioners
SAFMC Members
Jackie Fauls
Greg Holder
Gil McRae
Mark Robson
Karen Ventimiglia
Nick Wiley