

Emergency Action Requests

Received as of 5/20/2020

1. Increase Red Snapper Season

Received: 4/14/2020

From: Vaughnre@aol.com (no name indicated), identical request received from Captain David Nelson.

Format: email direct to Council members

Request:

“It has been ten years since the red snapper fishery in the SA was closed to fishing, in January, 2010. This closure came about due to data poor assessments that lacked proper hook/Line sampling and used the wrong selectivity across all fisheries. MARMAP Chevron trap sampling the primary fisheries independent data has had the wrong selectivity in every assessment. In 2018, a new study conducted by scientists in Florida (FWC), shed some light on the selectivity issue for red snapper. This new, “best available science” on red snapper selectivity shows that all fisheries are dome shaped and that larger older red snapper, will never be seen in any data set. This means that the results of all previous assessments were never right from day 1, and the stock was not depleted in 2009, before it was closed. Most importantly, this means that the fishery has been closed for over a decade when it was not necessary. Even though there is a process for moving forward with an updated assessment for red snapper, the people of the SA whose lives were economically disrupted by this closure, deserve a more drastic measure. The last ten years with a healthy rebuilding fishery closed, should end as soon as possible while the updated assessment process is moving forward. Along with these facts, the current economic situation in all fisheries, being caused by the pandemic, is a disaster that deserves an emergency rule (link below). The summer weather window along with summer tourism season, only gives the industry a limited amount of time to make up for current losses. The red snapper fishery can be open by this Council, with an emergency rule (see link below). The fishermen of the SA are asking this Council to open the fishery after we are cleared from the current pandemic, for 60 days at one fish per person per day and 200 pounds per day commercial, to offset the economic hardship of the unnecessary ten year closure, and the current economic hardship that is being caused by the Covid Pandemic. This can be done before or during the June meeting. All we need is to get this in front of the Council for a vote. Please vote to open this fishery or ask the Secretary of Commerce to open it as soon as the pandemic has cleared.”

2. Ban Balloon Releases

Received: 5/11/2020

From: Janie Thomas, Shrimp Producers Association

Format: Verbally to Chair

Request:

SAFMC enact regulations similar to Florida's that prohibit the release of balloons due to their dangers to turtles and other marine species.

FL statute

379.233 Release of balloons.—

(1) The Legislature finds that the release into the atmosphere of large numbers of balloons inflated with lighter-than-air gases poses a danger and nuisance to the environment, particularly to wildlife and marine animals.

(2) It is unlawful for any person, firm, or corporation to intentionally release, organize the release, or intentionally cause to be released within a 24-hour period 10 or more balloons inflated with a gas that is lighter than air except for:

(a) Balloons released by a person on behalf of a governmental agency or pursuant to a governmental contract for scientific or meteorological purposes;

(b) Hot air balloons that are recovered after launching;

(c) Balloons released indoors; or

(d) Balloons that are either biodegradable or photodegradable, as determined by rule of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, and which are closed by a hand-tied knot in the stem of the balloon without string, ribbon, or other attachments. In the event that any balloons are released pursuant to the exemption established in this paragraph, the party responsible for the release shall make available to any law enforcement officer evidence of the biodegradability or photodegradability of said balloons in the form of a certificate executed by the manufacturer. Failure to provide said evidence shall be prima facie evidence of a violation of this act.

(3) Any person who violates subsection (2) is guilty of a noncriminal infraction, punishable by a fine of \$250.

(4) Any person may petition the circuit court to enjoin the release of 10 or more balloons if that person is a citizen of the county in which the balloons are to be released.

History.—s. 1, ch. 89-113; s. 186, ch. 99-245; s. 53, ch. 2008-247.

Note.—Former s. 372.995.

3. Oculina Opened for Shrimping

Received: 5/11/2020

From: Marilyn Solorzano

Format: email to staff

Note: The submitter offered this in response to the EO, but also asked for a change by August 2020, which is more compatible with an EA.

Request:

We would like to have the Oculina Bank re-opened shrimping. Many miles of traditional trawl grounds were closed where there was no coral to exist. We can get further coordinates together but most have been recently submitted by Mike Merrifield Shrimp AP Chair to the SAFMC when the last closure was wrongfully and incorrectly implemented. Coral council agreed with shrimp AP on allowing some of the areas to re-opened to shrimping yet none of this has happened to date. These areas that were agreed upon by both the Shrimp AP & coral AP should be opened immediately. Records that SAFMC have from joint meetings with Shrimp AP, Coral AP committees and council should show unified agreement that these areas could be opened immediately with little discussion needed and no damage or harm would be done to the coral ecosystem or environment.

WE REQUEST BOTTOM TO BE RE-OPENED ASAP FOR ROCK SHRIMPING and would like this to be prepared and completed expediently, in re of the Presidents executive order. We would like to be able to work these areas this season starting August 1 2020. This is considered urgent as restrictions and regulations be lifted in this area to allow for US shrimpers to utilize areas that were traditional trawl grounds in the past and were wrongfully implemented as closed areas.