



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 20, 2026

Trish Murphey, Chair
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
4055 Faber Place Drive
Suite 201
North Charleston, SC 29405

Andy Strelcheck, NOAA Fisheries Regional Administrator
NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701

Dear Chair Murphey, Mr. Strelcheck, and Members of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council,

I am writing to express my strong support for Snapper Grouper Amendment 56, which would allow fishermen to access seasonally closed areas using innovative on-demand gear. I encourage the Council to resume development of this important action and move it toward completion as soon as possible. Amendment 56 offers a practical solution and is a first step to strengthen coastal economies, support domestic seafood production, and help working fishermen make a living while maintaining important conservation protections. While seasonal nearshore closures are vital to protecting North Atlantic right whales, they have also limited access to historic fishing grounds, forcing a false choice between species recovery and the economic survival of fishermen.

Allowing the use of innovative on-demand, or ropeless, fishing gear in areas that are seasonally closed to conventional trap gear provides a balanced path forward. This cutting-edge, reliable technology eliminates the vertical lines that pose whale entanglement risk while allowing fishermen to safely and responsibly continue operations. It demonstrates that economic activity and marine conservation do not need to be competing priorities.

Years of on-the-water testing under Council-supported Exempted Fishing Permits have shown that on-demand gear is reliable and workable in real fishing conditions. However, temporary permits are not a long-term substitute for clear and durable regulations. Adopting Amendment 56 would provide certainty for fishermen, encourage investment in proven technology, and support the continued production of American seafood, aligning with the Executive Order on strengthening U.S. seafood competitiveness and domestic food production (EO 14276).

For many fishermen, access to these fishing opportunities is essential to paying the bills, sustaining local businesses, and preserving working waterfront communities. Completing Amendment 56 would help ensure that fishermen can coexist with conservation measures while contributing to regional economic stability and food supply.

Thank you for your continued leadership in balancing conservation priorities with the economic realities facing fishing communities. I appreciate your consideration of this important action.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Randy A. Fine". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

Randy Fine
Representative, FL - 06