From: Mike Schmidtke
To: Council Members
Cc: Myra Brouwer; John Hadley; John Carmichael
Subject: FW: 2 for 1 comment
Date: Thursday, September 9, 2021 9:38:00 AM

Hello Council Members,

Please see the following public comment. Sorry for any repetition, but want to make sure it was distributed to everyone.

Mike

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Sent: Thursday, September 9, 2021 8:30 AM
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Subject:

South Atlantic Injustices

As a former N.C. SG commercial A.P. rep. 15 years ago, i find it impossible to watch the corrupt systemic bias inherent in this council and continue to bite my tongue. My first concern stems from a pending agenda discussion as pertaining to the 2/1 permit sanction on commercial SG permits. Since 1998 this council has rationalized the industry down from around 3000 permits to around 464 here in 2021. I only recently bought another vessel which came with a SG permit which i did not need since i already have one on another vessel which i intend to transfer. Anyway, in the process of selling this permit, the recipient made me aware that he was sweating bullets since he was down to a couple of months left to either acquire another permit or lose his original investment in the other in a one year time frame allowance. Meanwhile, this council continues to permit charter/headboats 23 years after they rationalized the commercial fishery down to its present state, and six years

after they finally issued a control date on the for hire industry, not to mention allow and unlimited expansion on a recreational fishery. Don't get me wrong, i have nothing against anyone in the for hire or recreational fishery, but i do have a serious problem with a council that continues to exterminate one group while allowing the uncontrolled expansion of others and allowing businesses to have been started on the backs of the disenfranchised. This debacle alone speaks volumes of the biased management inherent in this council and just underscores why our nation is importing over 90% of it's seafood. And finally on this topic, right before i resigned from the A.P. i asked the council what the average age of the SG permit holders was back in 2006. I was told then that 90% of the permittee's were 50 years or older. What this means is that the fishery is getting ready to take another big hit as fishermen age out. I just turned 69. In any event, it is time for this council to immediately rescind this BLATANT disregard!

My second concern is, when someone tells me to believe the science in this day and age pardon me for my skepticism. Fact is i have only this council to blame. Take for instance this councils upcoming agenda item of reallocating another 8% of the snowy grouper quota that previously was 96% commercial, now supposedly down to 83% and proposed to be lowered to 75%. Of course asking the public their opinion on this approach with such a predicted outcome is made all the more laughable when you ask yourself how a species with a 5700 fish coastwise ACL allows 15 or 20 million anglers coast wide a four month season to harvest it....all the while ignoring a (1) one hook rig limit on a species that will have 100% catch and release mortality.....in a fishery that has a one per boat bag limit. Never even mind trying to rectify how a species that usually co occurs with tilefish....a fishery that has a far more liberal bag limit of 3 per person....survives into the future with such sound management. And please as a council don't bother asking how many anglers or charter captains are actually going to drop one rig with a boatload of anglers? The bottom line is the coastwide rec. ACL gets caught or discarded out of my inlet of Hatteras alone. Even more laughable was how the rec. ACL was derived. In 2013 via a recreational MRIP survey, (MRIP of course being used to previously reallocate 13% of the quota) the average weight at intercept was something like 26.8lbs.. Of course when the council went to reallocate they fell back to the old MRFS 6.6 lb. average. After all... 26.8lbs doesn't divide into a 120.000 lb quota very we'll even if the quota was reallocated 100% recreationally. The bottom line is and i am sure i will get crucified for saying the obvious, the only way the rec. fishery should have ever been allowed was a mini season such as the red snapper or with a lottery tag. Of course with this council, no accountability, no problem. It will just reallocate from the commercials and profess it's conservation ethic! What a joke.....

And speaking of accountability, my final compliant stems from this councils application of the management plans in place and the councils desire to turn a blind eye to any and all rec overages while shutting down the industry long before they have reached their minuscule quotas. Take for instance blufeline tilefish in N.C., a state that accounts for roughly 75% of the quota coast wide. The fishery, is supposedly held to a 50/50 quota. For the record, there are 17 SG permittee's in Dare county and they are responsible for the lions share of the coastwise commercial ACL on a fishery allowed 300lbs per trip. Conversely, there are over 90 charter headboat permittee's that are allowed to catch 3 per person which equates to 24 fish including captain and mate....allowing a trip to come perilously close to equaling a commercial trip. Never mind the hoards of private boaters that frequent not only this

area...but the whole SA. The question is, how does a council expect to retain credibility when it has allowed rec. overages to proliferate 7 straight years to where they were over almost 400% in 2020? Another question that begs and answer, if the councils inaction signals that the stock is not in as bad of shape as previously thought, then when is the commercial community going to get the opportunity to bask in the bounty? The fact is maybe the science does need to be revisited. After all, the state of N.C. just went from a 10lb. citation to a 12lb. on said species. Anyway, the commercial fleet that by and large starts at about the same time as the rec. fleet was shut down in early August this year. Of course the recreational fleet fished right on through the month leaving one to ponder what the overage will be in 2021.....or eight years in a row.

Finally, it has come to my attention that there is a new Regional Administrator on the block. Andy, what's left of the commercial community welcomes you as a breath of fresh air. My only hope, as well as that of the few of us remaining is that you simply follow the law and simply "distribute the recovery efforts and benefits equitably". That certainly isn't too much to ask..... Sincerely jeff oden

Here are just a few questions i would like answered with more forthcoming....

1. Since a fishery has to be overfished to shut down a rec. fishery, how does a council or RA rectify allowing overfishing to continue 7 straight years without addressing the issue?
2. What are the implications of the recreational overages to the commercial fishery that has been held accountable?
3. How can a council rationally allow a fishery with somewhere around a 5700 fish ACL (snowy) , allow upwards of 15 million anglers four months to prosecute the fishery, much less propose to reallocate it when a 100% still wouldn't be enough?