

To the Georgia Members of the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council: I've written to the council in support of Marine Protected Areas, SMZs and other measures I believe would be beneficial to our fishery. When I saw a piece on Amendment 36 in the Savannah Morning News, I sent the attached letter in. I wanted to make sure you saw it. Thanks

Letters to the Editor Friday

Posted: August 21, 2014 - 9:07pm | **Updated:** August 22, 2014 - 7:47am

Fisherman endorses giving fish place to reproduce

I'm glad the Fisheries Council is trying to do something about declining populations of deep-water bottom fish like snapper and grouper.

They are fun to catch and even better to eat. As noted in the column that ran on Monday, Aug. 14, "Give fish more room to reproduce, grow," having more of them swimming around off our coast is also good for our local economy.

I fish in the creeks near Thunderbolt, and I take my 22-foot Fiberskiff as far offshore as I can safely go to catch snapper, grouper and kings. I also fish inshore for reds and trout. Not surprisingly, in both places my catches have dramatically decreased over the past twenty years.

The council was originally considering creating and expanding marine protected areas for the purpose of protecting the declining populations of these fish, and that was a concept that made a lot of sense. Instead, the council is looking at "special management zones." The zones are smaller, more targeted management tools created to specifically protect places where fish spawn. They will be easier to assess and enforce and, I hope, easier to enact.

I'm a recreational fisherman, not a marine biologist, but giving bottom fish a place to reproduce free from fishing pressure seems a step in the right direction toward a sustainable coast. We owe it to future generations to try to leave them an intact fishery.

JEFF JONES

Savannah