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March 10, 2010

To: Kate Michie
NOAA Fisheries Service
Southeastern Regional Office
Sustainable Fisheries Division
263 13th Avenue
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701- 5505

Re: Public comment on DEIS for South Atlantic Snapper Grouper Amendment 17A, FB10-017

Dear Kate Michie,
Thank you and NOAA for taking on the reality of the issue of over fishing our stocks.
I am a coastal recreational fisherman in eastern North Carolina and live on the water. I have a regular local government job and should not allow my name to be stated or face possible termination by political groups.
As you may know, North Carolina passed the North Carolina Coastal Habitat Protection Plan behind closed doors and like many of our legislated laws it has many uses that are now illegal but they choose not to enforce at this time-when they deem necessary. I guess I don't have to tell you where our state lists in illegal top government officials? I had to erase a lot more about these issues to clean this up.
My fishing partners and I enjoy bottom fishing the live bottom and artificial reef areas in the 16 to 45 mile range off shore, from South of Cape Lookout to North of Frying Pan shoals.

1. I would be more than happy to fill out trip reports on my computer if there was an easy accessible website-general location (longs and lats), boat registration, number on board, species caught, kept and released.
2. Lets get the catch numbers accurate
3. I may keep 3 grouper a year on average and have release gear as required in Florida. I have regularly witnessed 900 + lbs per trip per commercial vessel in my area (target species grouper), they claim they make over 6 figures/year. In living on the coast for over 20 years and

knowing lots of fishing people I don't think you could tally their keep added together for a year and reach those one trip 3-day numbers.

4. My boat has only caught one American red in five years and it was a keeper. My catch mostly consist of white mouth grunts, a few b-liners, a few pink snapper and maybe a few black sea bass on a good day. Basically enough to take home and cook a fresh catch for our friends and us.
5. I have a problem with fish pots, sometimes they will wrap up an artificial reef where it would be risky to try and motor through, much less fish. Any live bottom is rapped up with fish pots, are there any restrictions or can everybody call it a job and string all they wish. Could there be some season on them and keep them from using artificial reefs that recreational fisherman have contributed to?
6. I understand the season has been closed for a couple of months and Still can get grouper at the restaurants. It seems NC's enforcement in these areas will continue to be selective. Sorry, but I expect the day when the season opens, it will be undersize fish as usual being caught and released by the recreational folks-I wonder what happened to the keepers? I am not aware of anyone checking the commercial boats going out every good day now?
7. Will there be anyone checking the large organized shippers of wholesale seafood? Wonder where they get all those grouper and snapper?
8. I applaud your attempt to do something, I get tired of hearing how we recreational fisherman are cleaning them out- it must be someone else, I probably spend more than $1,000 per pound on the fish I take in the commerce of the industry. Someone needs to explain its not a life and generation grant to own all the fishes of the sea, I don't like my job, but it is what I have to do to pay my bills. Lets all go fish for a living and hunt the rest of the year- wow, what a perfect world.
9. I think the recreational folks and environmentalist would subsidize these commercial folks by paying them their listed income tax reported annually if it would terminate their license and give everyone the same rules and limits. It should surely go a long ways in sustaining the fish stocks.
10. I think reassessing the geographic areas for closures is good, the coast and methods vary between here and Florida.
11. I think penalties for violators here find the good old boys club still working well with the judges and attorneys. A good slap on the wrist and don't get caught again.

12. I will wait for future items that you guys may tackle to give my concern over the commercial fleet of menhaden vessels off our outer banks, roller netters, mahi long liners on the weed lines or the purse seiners catching tons of immature spot, croaker, trout and flounder in the Pamlico and core sound areas for crab bait?

Thank you again for allowing tax paying US contributing citizens to comment on proposed rules that affect my main recreations of life.

Sincerely, an American