To: South Atlantic Council

Over the years the NMFS has encouraged fishermen to adapt to changes in regulations by targeting a variety of species over the course of a given year. In the past year in preparation for changing regulations many fishermen have diversified into other fisheries. My family has done the same by starting to fish for sea bass.

Before we started last August, Florida caught 2% or less of the sea bass quota in every year prior to 2009. Not because of lack of sea bass, but because of lack of effort. The abundance of other species did not necessitate sea bass fishing effort. For obvious reasons we have had to adapt. In 2009 Florida accounted for a much larger portion of the quota even with the shortened season.

In the 17A alternative it says to account for sea bass pot catches up to 2008. The council should change this to December 2009 for vessels in Florida and Georgia who started in this fishery for the sake of their survival this past year. If we can make exceptions for the entire state of South Carolina and the closed areas for red snapper, then surely an exception can be made for a few sea bass fishermen. Fishermen who are barely surviving these difficult times and entered this fishery only recently to save their own livelihoods and to keep their families from asking for government handouts.

Thank you for your consideration in this important matter.

Thank you,

Captain David Nelson