



February 4, 2010

Mr. Duane Harris, Chairman
South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council
105 Demere Retreat Lane
St. Simons Island, GA 31522

Dear Chairman Harris,

On behalf of the members of the American Sportfishing Association (ASA), I am writing to express our concern with the inequitable representation of the state of Florida within the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (SAFMC) Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC). Florida has a reputation for solid, technical, fisheries science and management but is greatly under represented on the SSC. As the most fishing-dependent state within the SAFMC's jurisdiction, Florida should have a stronger presence within the SSC commensurate with the biological and economic importance that fishing in Florida has within the region.

ASA is the sportfishing industry's trade association, committed to representing the interests of the entire sportfishing community. We give the industry a unified voice and invest in long-term ventures to ensure the industry will remain strong and prosperous, as well as safeguard and promote the enduring social, economic and conservation values of sportfishing in America.

According to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) saltwater fishing data, Florida ranks first not only in the south Atlantic, but in the entire U.S. in number of recreational fishing trips, jobs supported by recreational fishing, and recreational fishing expenditures. Within the south Atlantic region, east Florida represents 55% of the number of trips, 64% of the number of jobs supported, and 66% of the expenditures related to saltwater recreational fishing. Approximately a quarter of all U.S. saltwater finfish harvest in 2008 occurred in Florida. In addition, Florida is the top destination state for non-resident anglers to fish. Clearly, the importance of fishing in Florida cannot be overstated.

We therefore are strongly concerned that only three of the sixteen members of the SSC are from Florida. The SSC has a major role in decisions that affect south Atlantic fisheries, and while the recent amendments to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act have given the SSC considerable weight in the Council process, the south Atlantic SSC has not been reviewed in light of this fact. As a

AMERICAN SPORTFISHING ASSOCIATION

225 REINEKERS LANE, SUITE 420, ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314 • 703-519-9691 • FAX: 703-519-1872
WEB: WWW.ASAFISHING.ORG • E-MAIL: INFO@ASAFISHING.ORG

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technical committee, the SSC has many important responsibilities, including recommending annual catch limits and playing a major role in stock assessment development and review. It is therefore important that this committee have the right technical and scientific balance.

In the current economic climate, the economic impacts of fisheries management decisions should be given heavy consideration, especially since decisions made by the SSC can have huge implications for the sportfishing industry and coastal communities not only in the southeast, but across the country. We therefore urge you to provide appropriate balance in the SSC's membership makeup.

Sincerely,



Patty Doerr
Director of Ocean Resource Policy

cc: Dr. Roy Crabtree, Southeast Regional Administrator, NOAA Fisheries
Members, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
Bob Mahood, Executive Director, South Atlantic Fishery Management Council