

2017 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 113

BY REPRESENTATIVES IVEY, AMEDEE, BACALA, BAGLEY, BISHOP, BROADWATER, COUSSAN, CREWS, DAVIS, DEVILLIER, DWIGHT, EMERSON, HAVARD, HENRY, HORTON, MAGEE, MCFARLAND, MIGUEZ, PEARSON, SCHEXNAYDER, SCHRODER, STEFANSKI, TALBOT, AND ZERINGUE AND SENATORS ALARIO, ALLAIN, APPEL, BARROW, BISHOP, BOUDREAUX, CARTER, CHABERT, CLAITOR, COLOMB, CORTEZ, DONAHUE, ERDEY, FANNIN, GATTI, HEWITT, JOHNS, LAFLEUR, LAMBERT, LONG, LUNEAU, MARTINY, MILKOVICH, MILLS, MIZELL, MORRELL, MORRISH, PEACOCK, PERRY, PETERSON, RISER, GARY SMITH, JOHN SMITH, TARVER, THOMPSON, WALSWORTH, WARD, AND WHITE

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to not move forward with implementation of the red snapper exempted fishing permit application that has been submitted to the National Marine Fisheries Service in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

WHEREAS, red snapper regulations and management decisions in the federal Gulf of Mexico waters are controlled by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (the Gulf Council), one of eight regional fishery management councils established by the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976, designed to manage fishery resources from where state waters end, out to the two hundred-mile limit of the Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, the Gulf Council is composed of three representatives from the state of Alabama, four from the state of Florida, three from Louisiana, three from Mississippi, and three from Texas, and one representative of the National Marine Fisheries Service, an office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration within the United States Department of Commerce; and

WHEREAS, because both the Gulf Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service are entities that are responsible for fisheries management regimes for all of the federal off-shore waters, the tendency is to use data from all the federal off-shore waters to develop and apply the same regulations across wide swaths of the federal waters rather than from more targeted data for management regimes for waters off the coast of one state; and

WHEREAS, the numbers of red snapper have been increasing dramatically in the federal and state waters off the coast of Louisiana, but the Gulf Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service have continued to adopt and implement regulations applicable to the entirety of the recreational red snapper fishery based on the total population of red snapper found in the federal waters thereby depriving Louisiana fishermen of the opportunity to take advantage of the bounty that our waters provide; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana has attempted for several years to work with the Gulf Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service to come to an accord whereby Louisiana could manage its own red snapper fishery in a manner different than the regulations applied to the rest of the federal waters and more applicable to the numbers of red snapper found off the coast of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, the first major step was taken in that direction at the April 6, 2017, meeting of the Gulf Council where the council adopted a motion to begin the amendment that could eventually allow Louisiana the ability to manage the recreational red snapper fishery in the federal and state waters off the Louisiana coast, possibly beginning with state management of the fishery for a three-year period from 2019 through 2021; and

WHEREAS, rather than wait for the Gulf Council to deliberate over the next year to refine the "Louisiana only" plan for state management from 2019 through 2021, allowing access to red snapper to all recreational and for-hire components of the fishery, the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries announced a pilot program whereby only one hundred fifty selected participants in the recreational red snapper fishery would participate in the pilot program that involves management through the collection of near real-time data collection via smartphone submission of catch information for up to twenty-five thousand pounds of red snapper rather than specifying certain days for open season and daily take limits; and

WHEREAS, such a limited pilot program restricts the number of anglers that will benefit from this first step to state management of the recreational red snapper fishery and

will therefore create a privileged sector of the Louisiana recreational fishing community, further exacerbating conflicts in the coastal waters of Louisiana.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to not move forward with implementation of the red snapper exempted fishing permit application that has been submitted to the National Marine Fisheries Service in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration but to aggressively pursue the opportunity to gain approval for state management of the red snapper fishery in the state and federal waters off the Louisiana coast in a manner that enables all fishermen, not a select few, to enjoy the bounty of fish available to anglers in those waters.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE