

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 95

BY SENATOR ALLAIN

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority and the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to develop and submit a proposal seeking Open Ocean Trustee Implementation Group (TIG) and Region-wide (RW) TIG funds to monitor red snapper and other reef fish impacted by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

WHEREAS, red snapper and other reef fish are vital to the Gulf of Mexico ecosystem and are integral to both recreation and commerce in the Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, red snapper and other reef fish are among the most valuable fish in the Gulf of Mexico and are immensely important to both recreational and commercial fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, the number of allowable recreational fishing days in federal waters for red snapper have been consistently reduced year-after-year; and

WHEREAS, it is anticipated that the abundance and biomass of red snapper off of Louisiana's coast is high enough to sustain a substantial increase in harvest, but a more robust and comprehensive evaluation of red snapper is warranted to more accurately understand the health of the species; and

WHEREAS, a number of other reef fish species also occur within these same habitats off of Louisiana, but data on the abundance, biomass, and health of those reef fish species is not well known; and

WHEREAS, the United States Congress appropriated \$10,000,000 to better understand the health of red snapper in the entire Gulf of Mexico through surveying and assessing populations on and aggregated near marine structures, including offshore oil and gas platforms, artificial reefs, and structures created in the Gulf of Mexico, as well as naturally occurring reefs and rock structures; and

WHEREAS, this congressional funding was awarded to the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium that has developed a substantial and scientifically sound study utilizing habitat mapping, high reward tagging, direct counts, and depletion fishing methods, but is insufficient for Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, this congressionally funded study is likely to be insufficient for Louisiana due to the lack of existing habitat data, the variable water clarity, and the presence of hypoxia off of Louisiana's coast; and

WHEREAS, additional habitat information and enhanced data collections are necessary to fully understand the abundance, biomass, and health of red snapper and reef fish and will directly benefit Louisiana's ability to generate an accurate estimate of red snapper abundance and biomass off the Louisiana coast; and

WHEREAS, the data collected will advance our understanding of the status and trends of key water column resources and habitats encountered during the study; and

WHEREAS, there are Deepwater Horizon (DWH) Natural Resource Damage (NRD) Open Ocean TIG and RW TIG funds that are most appropriate for these Gulf of Mexico restoration activities of monitoring red snapper and other reef fish impacted by the DWH oil spill.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority and the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to develop and submit a proposal seeking Open Ocean TIG and RW TIG funds to monitor red snapper and other reef fish impacted by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, in addition to seeking DWH NRD funds, Louisiana will endeavor to dedicate funding of its own from the Artificial Reef Development Fund, the Saltwater Fish Research and Conservation Fund, and Sport Fish Restoration funds to supplement the DWH NRD funds and the congressionally funded study.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to all DWH Trustees overseeing the use of the Open Ocean TIG and RW TIG funds and to each member of the Louisiana delegation to the United States Congress.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES