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Thank you Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Louisiana's fishing community before the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Natural Resources to present our opinion on the management of red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. As stated in your letter, red snapper management in the Gulf of Mexico has been a contentious issue for several years now, specifically targeting Louisiana's recreational angling community. Louisiana is well known as one of the nation's premier fishing locations and also depends on its abundant seafood resource year-round to maintain the economic viability of coastal communities. Red snapper is highly prized and sought after by both resident and non-resident recreational anglers. Over the past 20 years, the recreational fishery has seen red snapper seasons go from 365 day per year season to a mere 28 days in 2013. We recognize the need and see it as our job to properly manage the red snapper resource and restore populations that are overfished, but in doing so we must also minimize the impact on anglers and associated fishing industries. Based on sound science and input from the recreational fishing community's dissatisfaction with federal management, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) petitioned the Louisiana Legislature in 2012 to pass House Concurrent Resolution 10, encouraging National Marine Fisheries Service and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Gulf Council) to approve a weekend-only fishery management season for Louisiana. Realizing no action in this regard was being taken by the Gulf Council or National Marine Fisheries Service, the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission passed a notice of intent in June 2012 to establish a weekend-only red snapper season in Louisiana territorial waters beginning the Saturday before Palm Sunday through September 30. The intent of this season was to provide anglers a wider time frame to fish by extending the season and to restore economic viability to coastal communities. Pressure from the recreational fishing community and Legislative intent prompted the Secretary of LDWF to declare fishery management authority out to 9 nautical miles. As you all know, congressional actions transferring management authority over red snapper and providing states with management authority out to XX miles are being considered.

In our opinion, the management of recreational fisheries, particularly red snapper, cannot continue to take a one-shoe-fits-all for the Gulf States. The reason the Gulf Council chooses consistent, inflexible management measures is that it's simply easy to implement. It's time that the Gulf Council moves past the easy approach and starts to consider flexible management measures that continue to rebuild the red snapper stock, while considering the needs of individual coastal states and the economic viability of coastal communities. With these considerations in mind, Louisiana went before the Gulf Council in April of 2012 to advocate a regional management system. We refer to the approach as regional management where management of the red snapper fishery would be delegated to each Gulf state. Responsibility of the red snapper resource would remain the charge and authority of National Marine Fisheries Service and the Gulf Council. Delegating authority to the states would provide flexibility to decide when, where

and how red snapper will be harvested. Each state's fishery management agency is more receptive and responsive to the wants and needs of its own constituents than a federal agency who has broader goals. That is very evident in the existing controversy over red snapper management where the states of Louisiana, Texas and Florida have taken immediate action to satisfy the will of their constituents.

One might raise a concern as to the capability of the states to take on the responsibility of managing and controlling the recreational red snapper fishery. I can only speak for Louisiana by saying that we will and have already devoted substantial resources towards gathering the best, most relevant data to properly manage the red snapper resource. We have established a recreational quota monitoring survey designed to provide real-time, in-season red snapper landings estimates in Louisiana. The survey was put in place this year to provide accurate information on Louisiana red snapper landings. The new, real-time monitoring conducted by the Department has already benefited Louisiana fishermen by increasing Louisiana's 2013 federal red snapper season from nine days, to the current season of 28 days.

Without Louisiana's quota monitoring survey we are dependent on the National Marine Fisheries Service's Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). The MRIP was not designed for quota monitoring so it doesn't provide timely landings needed to avoid harvest overruns, as evidenced by the 19 percent – 89 percent recreational red snapper overruns in the Gulf of Mexico in the past six years. The only year a measured harvest overrun didn't occur was 2010 when the fishery was closed for a substantial time period as a result of the BP oil spill.

In closing I'd like to reiterate that fishery management must evolve and provide more flexibility in order to earn the confidence of anglers and the industry. We believe the answer is "Regional Management".