

**AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE
TO H.R. 4587
OFFERED BY MR. WESTERMAN OF ARKANSAS**

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

1 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

2 This Act may be cited as the “Red Snapper Act of
3 2023”.

**4 SEC. 2. CONDITIONS FOR RULES RELATED TO CERTAIN
5 AREA CLOSURES.**

6 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

7 (1) Fishing is a major economic driver in the
8 South Atlantic. In Florida alone, recreational an-
9 glers provide \$14,000,000,000 in economic output
10 and support 119,000 jobs.

11 (2) Red snapper is a highly prized and sought
12 after reef fish by both recreational and commercial
13 fishermen.

14 (3) The 6-day recreational red snapper season
15 in 2018 added \$13,000,000 to the gross domestic
16 product of the South Atlantic region.

17 (4) For the last 10 years, fishery managers
18 have successfully been working to rebuild the red

1 snapper stock in the South Atlantic. There is cur-
2 rently record high abundance and strong recruit-
3 ment within the stock.

4 (5) This record abundance has led to increased
5 out-of-season encounters and discards which is driv-
6 ing red snapper mortality.

7 (6) Despite these increased discards, it is the
8 overriding opinion of the South Atlantic Fishery
9 Management Council's Snapper Grouper Advisory
10 Panel that based on members' collective on-the-water
11 experience, the red snapper fishery is recovered.

12 (7) However, options for future consideration to
13 reduce out-of-season encounters and red snapper
14 mortalities include shorter seasons and broad area
15 closures for the snapper-grouper fishery in the South
16 Atlantic.

17 (8) The State of Florida is concerned with the
18 economic implications of area closures for the South
19 Atlantic snapper-grouper recreational fishery.

20 (9) \$5,100,000 has been invested in inde-
21 pendent survey data over the last three fiscal years,
22 including \$3,300,000 for the South Atlantic Great
23 Red Snapper Count to estimate the number of red
24 snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*) in the South At-
25 lantic waters from North Carolina to Florida.

1 (10) The National Marine Fisheries Service
2 should incorporate data from this survey into the
3 National Marine Fisheries Service stock assessments
4 as expeditiously as possible to better inform fishery
5 management decisions.

6 (b) CONDITION ON ISSUANCE OF RULE.—The Ad-
7 ministrators of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Ad-
8 ministration shall not issue an interim or final rule that
9 includes an area closure in the South Atlantic for species
10 managed under the Snapper-Grouper Fishery Manage-
11 ment Plan until—

12 (1) the South Atlantic Great Red Snapper
13 Count study is complete; and

14 (2) the data related to that study is integrated
15 into the upcoming South Atlantic red snapper re-
16 search track and operational stock assessment.

