

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 25

BY SENATORS ALLAIN, ADLEY, ALARIO, AMEDEE, APPEL, BROWN, BUFFINGTON, CHABERT, CLAITOR, CORTEZ, CROWE, ERDEY, GUILLORY, HEITMEIER, JOHNS, KOSTELKA, MARTINY, MILLS, MORRELL, MORRISH, MURRAY, NEVERS, PEACOCK, PERRY, RISER, GARY SMITH, THOMPSON, WALSWORTH, WARD, WHITE AND LONG

A RESOLUTION

To memorialize the Congress of the United States and request the secretary of the United States Department of Commerce to take such action as necessary to require the regional administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service's Southeast Regional Office and his scientists to attend a meeting of the Louisiana Senate Committee on Natural Resources, on a date that is convenient for the parties during the month of April or the first week of May, to provide information on the red snapper season.

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of the National Marine Fisheries Service, an agency in the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, through the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council, to manage and regulate marine species located in the Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, such management and regulation includes a determination of the sustainability of each species and preservation of the sustainability through the setting of take limits, individual fishing quotas, and opening and closing seasons; and

WHEREAS, on March 25, 2013, a temporary emergency rule was published in the Federal Register that gives the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Services the authority to set separate closure dates for the recreational red snapper season in federal waters off the individual Gulf of Mexico states; and

WHEREAS, the closure dates will depend on whether state regulations are consistent with federal regulations for the recreational red snapper season length or bag limit; and

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WHEREAS, the federal recreational season for Gulf of Mexico red snapper begins June 1 each year with a two-fish bag limit and the length of the season is determined by the amount of the quota, the average weight of fish landed, and the estimated catch rates over time; and

WHEREAS, since NOAA Fisheries is responsible for ensuring that the entire recreational harvest, including harvest in state waters, does not exceed the recreational quota, then if states establish a longer season or a larger bag limit for state waters than the federal regulations allow in federal waters, the federal season must be adjusted to account for the additional harvest expected in state waters; and

WHEREAS, if all states were to implement consistent regulations, the 2013 recreational season would be twenty-eight days, assuming the recreational quota is increased to 4.145 million pounds through separate rule-making; and

WHEREAS, in addition to Louisiana, the states of Texas and Florida have indicated to NOAA Fisheries that they will implement inconsistent red snapper regulations for their state waters; and

WHEREAS, without this emergency rule, the 2013 federal season would be reduced to twenty-two days to compensate for that additional expected harvest; and

WHEREAS, this emergency rule allows NOAA Fisheries to calculate the recreational red snapper fishing season separately in the exclusive economic zone off each state to account for any inconsistency of regulations in state waters; and

WHEREAS, based on the expected regulations for Texas, Louisiana, and Florida, the preliminary season lengths would be as follows: Texas, twelve days; Louisiana, nine days; Mississippi and Alabama, twenty-eight days; and Florida, twenty-one days; and

WHEREAS, on March 23, 2013, Louisiana implemented a weekend-only recreational red snapper season that will end on September 30, with a recreational bag limit of three fish per day at a sixteen-inch minimum; and

WHEREAS, the regional administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service's Southeast Regional Office and his scientists can provide information on the following issues: (1) emergency rule on the recreational closure authority specific to federal waters off individual states for the recreational red snapper component of

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the Gulf of Mexico reef fish fishery; (2) methodology for determination of the length, allocations, and quotas for the red snapper season; (3) plans for the future allocations and quotas of red snapper; (4) update on the regional and Gulf of Mexico red snapper stock assessments on natural and artificial habitats; (5) relationship of size of quota to recovery of red snapper fisheries; (6) general conditions and health of red snapper fisheries and projections for future; and (7) requirements in order for Louisiana to get additional allocations or quotas based on Louisiana's management and growth of the red snapper fisheries.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana memorializes the Congress of the United States and requests the secretary of the United States Department of Commerce to take such action as necessary to require the regional administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service's Southeast Regional Office and his scientists to attend a meeting of the Louisiana Senate Committee on Natural Resources, on a date that is convenient for the parties during the month of April or the first week of May, to provide information on the red snapper season.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution shall be transmitted to the secretary of the United States Senate and the clerk of the United States House of Representatives, to each member of the Louisiana delegation to the United States Congress, to the secretary of the United States Department of Commerce, and the regional administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service's Southeast Regional Office.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE