

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

In recent years, the Gulf of Mexico has contained the highest total allowable catch of red snapper in decades, but in 2016, anglers experienced the shortest recreational fishing season to date, lasting less than two weeks. The U.S. government has overseen the Gulf recreational red snapper fishery for nearly four decades. Today, federal management systems attempt to regulate red snapper fishing by the pound with tools specifically designed to manage the commercial sector, despite the fact that federal data collection systems are incapable of accounting to such a level of specificity for recreational harvests.

The U.S. government has, moreover, neglected to use recent data to provide meaningful guidelines and requirements for a systematic reallocation of federal fisheries. Except for minor adjustments to account for errors in its own data collection system, the Gulf red snapper fishery allocation is based on highly suspect data from 1979-1986 and has remained unchanged since 1991. The federal government is currently promoting a management strategy to privatize the Gulf red snapper fishery. Approximately 50 percent of the fishery is already held by private businesses, while another 20 percent has been designated to be sold. Shares of this public resource have also been given away for free, based on a commercial operator's past catch history. Because of extraordinarily remiss requirements in its conflict of interest guidelines, the federal fisheries management system allows commercial operators who already own red snapper shares or who may be gifted shares to serve on the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and to cast votes on issues that will result in direct financial benefit for them.

By creating a prohibitive environment for anglers and ethical issues among user groups and stakeholders, the U.S. government has proved itself incapable of properly managing red snapper fishing in the Gulf of Mexico, and all five states along the Gulf Coast have increasingly needed to implement regulations and seasons that are not consistent with the federal management plan.

Numerous studies, including some funded by NOAA Fisheries, indicate that the greatest economic engine in the Gulf reef fishery is the recreational angling sector, and federal control should be relinquished to the Gulf states, which depend most on this vital public resource.

RESOLVED

That the 85th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby encourage Congress to pass legislation or adopt policies allowing Texas to manage the Gulf of Mexico red snapper fishery out to 200 nautical miles.

That the Texas secretary of state forward official copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to the president of the Senate and to the speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress, and to all the members of the Texas delegation to Congress with the request that this resolution be entered into the Congressional Record as a memorial to the Congress of the United States of America.