

TESTIMONY OF Jamie Miller, Executive Director, The Department of Marine Resources, before the House Subcommittee on the Interior, Energy, and Environment, May 2, 2017

Subcommittee on the Interior, Energy, and Environment:

Thank you for taking the time to hear testimony today regarding the Red Snapper fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. **My name is Jamie Miller and I am the Executive Director at the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources.** My job consists of protecting, enhancing, and conserving my state's marine resources while allowing sustainable access to these resources. Today I would like to speak to you addressing the Red Snapper fishery in the Gulf of Mexico, specifically off the coast of Mississippi.

Within Mississippi, we have representation of all user groups in relation to Red Snapper harvest. The commercial group operates through the Individual Fisheries Quota (IFQ) system. The recreational sector through Amendment 40 is separated into two groups identified as the private sector and the charter/for-hire sector.

With these groups operating under a Gulf-wide quota system (divided by user group), there are issues within each group, but the largest issue with Red Snapper presently is within the recreational Red Snapper fishery. Over the last eight years the recreational private sector has seen annual seasons reduced from 53 days to 9 days. These conditions created by the current management system have led to derby seasons, which have frustrated the private recreational sector and forced them to fish offshore in less favorable and even dangerous conditions on occasion. These derby seasons have also decreased the ability of the Marine Recreational Informational Program (MRIP) to accurately determine harvest levels.

The state of Mississippi in response to this problem has created its own survey system called Tails n' Scales which allows a custom landings program for Red Snapper to be administered in Mississippi. This program has been funded completely within our state and is unique from other programs in that the angler must acquire a trip number before leaving the dock and be in possession of the number while on the water. By making this requirement mandatory, Mississippi management data is reported and verified quickly as well as being hyper-accurate. These data can now be used in determining catch targets for the recreational sector in a matter of days rather than in the six to ten months according to the current system.

The other Gulf states have developed similar landings programs to provide "custom" area fishery dependent data, which can be utilized in Gulf-wide or region-wide assessments to ensure that

overfishing is not occurring. Many of these state-based landings programs (including ours) are currently being certified by NOAA. We are at a crucial point in management of this species, and I would like to emphasize the importance of state and federal partnerships in this fishery to work together to ensure sustainable harvest benefiting this public resource.

Thank you, and I would be happy to answer any questions you have.