

December 2, 2019

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
U.S. Senate
520 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Doug Jones
U.S. Senate
330 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Garret Graves
U.S. House of Representatives
2402 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman
U.S. House of Representatives
1527 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Cassidy, Senator Jones, Representative Graves and Representative Huffman,

On behalf of the nation's recreational fishing and boating community, thank you for your leadership in support of Gulf of Mexico reef fish conservation through introducing the Direct Enhancement of Snapper Conservation and the Economy through Novel Devices (DESCEND) Act of 2019.

The Gulf of Mexico's recreational fisheries contribute \$11 billion to the economy annually and support 111,816 jobs. The region's recreational fishing community is comprised of 2.7 million saltwater anglers and thousands of fishing-dependent businesses who strongly support healthy marine resources. Part of this commitment to conservation includes minimizing bycatch and maximizing survival of released fish.

As you know, red snapper and other reef fish are often thrown overboard for a variety of reasons (e.g., being caught out of season or undersized). Due to the rapid change in pressure from being brought to the surface from depth, many of these fish cannot swim back down and end up dying at the surface. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Gulf red snapper are wasted each year. This is an economic and conservation travesty. Unfortunately, a bureaucratic roadblock related to an important oil spill recovery-funded project has prevented regulation from moving forward that would address this problem.

For fisheries as important and valuable as Gulf reef fish, we should be doing everything we can to conserve these fish stocks. By requiring reef fish fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico possess devices that help fish avoid the fatal effects of barotrauma, and by clarifying that oil spill recovery funds can be used for related projects, the DESCEND Act would be a tremendous step toward reducing wasteful discard mortality and ensuring the sustainability of the iconic Gulf red snapper and other reef fish.

We are grateful for your bipartisan commitment to Gulf of Mexico fisheries conservation through the science-based measures included in the DESCEND Act. We stand ready to assist you as you work toward passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

American Sportfishing Association
Angler Action Foundation
BoatU.S.
Center for Sportfishing Policy
Coastal Conservation Association
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation
International Game Fish Association
Marine Retailers Association of the Americas
National Marine Manufacturers Association
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Wild Oceans