

NMMA Comments to NOAA Support State Efforts to Improve South Atlantic Red Snapper Management

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The National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) recently submitted comments to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) supporting requests from Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina for exempted fishing permits to improve management of the South Atlantic red snapper fishery. The proposals would allow states to test new data collection and management approaches aimed at providing more accurate information about the fishery and improving access for recreational anglers.

Ensuring that recreational boaters and anglers have access to public waters and healthy fisheries is essential to the success of the recreational marine industry and the coastal communities it supports. Recreational boating generates \$230 billion in annual economic impact and supports more than 812,000 American jobs across 36,000 businesses. It is also a uniquely American manufacturing story, with 95 percent of boats sold in the United States are made in the United States, and 93 percent of boat builders are small businesses.

The importance of boating and fishing extends beyond the marine industry itself. New data from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis shows the outdoor recreation economy generated \$1.3 trillion in economic output in 2024, supporting 5.2 million jobs and accounting for 2.4 percent of U.S. GDP. Recreational boating and fishing are the number one contributors to that economy, underscoring how access to public waters and healthy fisheries supports both participation and economic growth.

In the South Atlantic region alone, recreational boating and fishing generate more than \$54 billion in economic impact and support approximately 190,000 jobs across Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. These economic benefits ripple through coastal communities, supporting boatbuilders, marinas, dealerships, tackle shops, and other small businesses that depend on anglers getting out on the water.

In its comments, NMMA emphasized that modernizing fisheries management through improved data collection is critical to sustaining this economic activity. Federal management of recreational fisheries has often relied on limited or outdated data, which can result in overly short or unpredictable fishing seasons. Even the threat of access restrictions can discourage participation and reduce demand throughout the recreational marine supply chain.

NMMA highlighted the success of the state-led red snapper management program in the Gulf of America, where improved data collection and tailored angler surveys have enabled states to set longer, more predictable seasons while maintaining strong conservation outcomes. The exempted fishing permit proposals submitted by South Atlantic states represent an opportunity to test similar approaches and strengthen partnerships between states and federal fisheries managers.

NMMA urged NOAA to approve the states' permit requests and continue working with state partners to modernize fisheries management, improve data accuracy, and ensure sustainable access to one of the region's most important recreational fisheries.

For questions, please contact Clay Crabtree, NMMA Senior Director of Public Policy, at crcrabtree@nmma.org.