

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 470

To provide that the Secretary of Commerce shall not issue an interim or final rule or Secretarial Amendment that includes an area or bottom closure in the South Atlantic for species managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region until the South Atlantic Great Red Snapper Count study is complete and the data related to that study is integrated into the stock assessment.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 16, 2025

Mr. RUTHERFORD (for himself, Mr. SOTO, Mr. BEAN of Florida, Mr. CARTER of Georgia, Ms. MACE, Mr. WEBSTER of Florida, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mr. DONALDS, Mr. SCOTT FRANKLIN of Florida, Ms. SALAZAR, Mr. DUNN of Florida, Ms. LEE of Florida, Mr. MAST, Mr. GIMENEZ, Mr. FRY, Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT of Georgia, and Mrs. LUNA) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To provide that the Secretary of Commerce shall not issue an interim or final rule or Secretarial Amendment that includes an area or bottom closure in the South Atlantic for species managed under the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region until the South Atlantic Great Red Snapper Count study is complete and the data related to that study is integrated into the stock assessment.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Red Snapper Act of
5 2025”.

6 **SEC. 2. CONDITIONS FOR RULES AND SECRETARIAL**
7 **AMENDMENTS RELATED TO CERTAIN AREA**
8 **CLOSURES.**

9 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

10 (1) Fishing is a major economic driver in the
11 South Atlantic. In Florida alone, recreational an-
12 glers provide \$14,000,000,000 in economic output
13 and support 119,000 jobs.

14 (2) Red snapper is a highly prized and sought
15 after reef fish by both recreational and commercial
16 fishermen.

17 (3) The 6-day recreational red snapper season
18 in 2018 added \$13,000,000 to the gross domestic
19 product of the South Atlantic region.

20 (4) Since 2010, fishery managers have success-
21 fully been working to rebuild the red snapper stock
22 in the South Atlantic. There is currently record high
23 abundance and strong recruitment within the stock.

1 (5) This record abundance has led to increased
2 out-of-season encounters and discards which is driv-
3 ing red snapper mortality.

4 (6) Despite these increased discards, it is the
5 overriding opinion of the South Atlantic Fishery
6 Management Council's Snapper Grouper Advisory
7 Panel that based on members' collective on-the-water
8 experience, the red snapper fishery is recovered.

9 (7) However, options for future consideration to
10 reduce out-of-season encounters and red snapper
11 mortalities include shorter seasons and broad area
12 closures for the snapper-grouper fishery in the South
13 Atlantic.

14 (8) The State of Florida is concerned with the
15 economic implications of area closures for the South
16 Atlantic snapper-grouper recreational fishery.

17 (9) \$8,700,000 has been invested in inde-
18 pendent survey data over the last 3 fiscal years, in-
19 cluding \$3,300,000 for the South Atlantic Great
20 Red Snapper Count to estimate the number of red
21 snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*) in the South At-
22 lantic waters from North Carolina to Florida.

23 (10) The National Marine Fisheries Service
24 should incorporate data from this survey into the
25 National Marine Fisheries Service stock assessments

1 as expeditiously as possible to better inform fishery
2 management decisions.

3 (b) CONDITION ON ISSUANCE OF CERTAIN RULE OR
4 SECRETARIAL AMENDMENT.—The Secretary of Com-
5 merce shall not issue an interim or final rule or a Secre-
6 tarial Amendment that includes an area or bottom closure
7 in the South Atlantic for species managed under the Fish-
8 ery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery
9 of the South Atlantic Region until—

10 (1) the South Atlantic Great Red Snapper
11 Count study is complete; and

12 (2) the data related to that study is integrated
13 into the first South Atlantic red snapper Southeast
14 Data, Assessment and Review stock assessment that
15 is carried out after the date of the enactment of this
16 section.

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