

SAMPLE TESTIMONY – AMENDMENT 50

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Amendment 50 - state management of red snapper for the private recreational angling sector. My name is _____ and I fish recreationally for red snapper (personal fishing history details).

I have not gotten into the details of the management of this fishery too much over the years but it had really gotten to the point where it was almost impossible for me to go offshore for snapper anymore. The seasons kept shrinking and it was difficult to have the weather line up with whatever short season was set. It really wasn't worth the time or the effort, and it just seemed like snapper fishing was going to become a thing of the past. That was really frustrating because if you went out there fishing for anything else it seemed like the only thing you could catch was red snapper – there are more red snapper out there than there have ever been.

But this past season gave me hope that maybe things can get back to normal for red snapper fishermen like me after the state of Texas took over management of the fishery. I wanted to come here tonight and really just applaud the state's efforts to improve the way it collects data and give us a longer season. It wasn't perfect – I will always want a longer season to get as many good weather days as possible to choose from because people like me are always juggling a thousand things – work, kids, family – but it was so much better than it was just a couple of years ago. I think the state is doing a great job and I think it will continue to improve how it manages red snapper. I have a lot more faith in Texas than I do in the federal government, and I am willing to do whatever I can to help. All fishermen want is a system that makes sense and I just want to thank folks like Robin Riechers, Lance Robinson and TPWD for developing a better system and working to improve things. I think the state understands how to best manage the fishery to meet the needs of everyone in the state, and that includes its charter/for-hire fleet and the anglers who use those boats. Every Gulf state should get to decide for itself if it wants to manage private boat anglers and the charter fleet. I personally think the state will ultimately deliver a better deal for anglers who fish on charter boats so I would like the state to consider taking over management of that part of the fishery as well.

Having said that, I understand that we need this amendment 50 to pass in order to make sure that the state keeps control of the red snapper fishery for anglers going forward. Like I said before, I don't know all the details but whatever the obstacles are I want to really encourage Robin and TPWD to stay on this path and do whatever is necessary to make sure Amendment 50 becomes the law of the land. The one thing that is plain for all anglers who fish for red snapper is that we don't want to go back to federal management. I think any type of management works best when it is local, and flexible, so whatever concessions need to be made today can be revisited in the future. We are finding out new information all the time that can be applied to how the states manage so I implore you not to allow this amendment to be defeated over what may be transient details. It has been too successful, and the alternative is simply unacceptable.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak here tonight and thanks again to Robin, Lance and the state of Texas for all it is doing to make this fishery work for all citizens of the state.

TALKING POINTS – AMENDMENT 50

- State management of red snapper has been a tremendous success so far, and a great improvement over previous federal management that had recently produced seasons as short as three days. Thank you to Robin Riechers, Lance Robinson and TPWD for their work on behalf of Texas’s anglers to develop better data collection systems and longer, more consistent seasons for anglers.
- The more opportunity the states have to take a larger role in the management of red snapper the better for everyone. State managers inherently have better insight into what works best for the anglers of their state and will ultimately produce more and better opportunities both for private boat anglers and the charter/for-hire fleet. Each state should have the choice to manage recreational anglers regardless of whether they fish on their own boats or on for-hire boats.
- Whatever the obstacles are for amendment 50, we encourage Texas to work with the other states to overcome them to ensure that management of recreational red snapper anglers stays in the states’ hands. Going back to the uncertainties and confusion of the federal management system is unacceptable. If nothing else, simply adopting all of the parameters of the current state management exempted fishing permit into Amendment 50 would ensure that we don’t go back to the chaos of federal management of this fishery.
- Unlike most other federal management plans, Amendment 50 should be constantly reviewed and adjusted to reflect current conditions among all Gulf states to ensure both the health of the red snapper resource and the ability of the public to access healthy marine resources. The states should not waste this opportunity to create a new, dynamic management model that works proactively on forward-looking information rather than the backward-looking, status quo management of the federal system.