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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3006

May 27, 2015

Dr. Roy Crabtree
Regional Administrator
NOAA Fisheries Service
Southeast Regional Office
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

Dear Dr. Crabtree,


I write today regarding a request you have received to regulate recreational catch of blueline tilefish along the Atlantic coast. The request would apply a restriction in Amendment 32 of the Snapper Grouper fishery management plan to the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Council jurisdictions. The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council has asked for restrictions in its waters to be carried out along the entire length of the Atlantic coast. I respectfully request that you deny the request to apply this catch limit to the Mid-Atlantic and New England jurisdictions.

I am concerned that there is not sufficient data from the Mid-Atlantic and New England jurisdictions to conclude that catch limits for the blueline tilefish stock are necessary in this region. While a recent stock assessment has shown the stock is overfished in the South Atlantic region, I have seen no data to that effect from other jurisdictions.

I am also opposed to this restriction being considered as an emergency action because there would be no public comment period or ability for affected stakeholders to have their voices heard about the impact this action will have on recreational fishing and local economies. Recreational fishermen I have spoken to assert that fishing for blueline tilefish in the Mid-Atlantic and New England jurisdictions is more limited than in the South Atlantic and occurs very far from the shoreline. There is no reason to consider the resource overfished in the Mid-Atlantic and New England.

Approving this request without data to back it up would be detrimental to the shore economy in my region, of which recreational fishing is a large factor. I urge you to use caution as you consider this request. With no sufficient data from the northern waters to substantiate this request, I believe applying this restriction outside of the South Atlantic region at this time is premature and without basis. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,


FRANK PALLONE, JR.
Member of Congress