

Union Calendar No. 606

118TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 4587

[Report No. 118-717]

To provide that the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shall not issue an interim or final rule that includes an area closure in the South Atlantic for species managed under the Snapper-Grouper Fishery Management Plan 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

JULY 12, 2023

Mr. RUTHERFORD introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources

OCTOBER 25, 2024

Additional sponsors: Mr. DUNN of Florida, Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana, Mr. WALTZ, Mr. CARTER of Georgia, Mr. DIAZ-BALART, Ms. MACE, Mr. DUNCAN, Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT of Georgia, Ms. SALAZAR, Ms. LEE of Florida, Mr. TIMMONS, Mr. SCOTT FRANKLIN of Florida, Mr. STEUBE, Mr. DONALDS, Mr. WEBSTER of Florida, Mr. FERGUSON, and Mr. BEAN of Florida

OCTOBER 25, 2024

Reported with an amendment, committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, and ordered to be printed

[Strike out all after the enacting clause and insert the part printed in *italic*]

[For text of introduced bill, see copy of bill as introduced on July 12, 2023]

A BILL

To provide that the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shall not issue an interim or final rule that includes an area closure in the South Atlantic for species managed under the Snapper-Grouper Fishery Management Plan 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 *2023”.*

6 **SEC. 2. CONDITIONS FOR RULES RELATED TO CERTAIN**
7 **AREA CLOSURES.**

8 *(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:*

9 *(1) Fishing is a major economic driver in the*
10 *South Atlantic. In Florida alone, recreational anglers*
11 *provide \$14,000,000,000 in economic output and sup-*
12 *port 119,000 jobs.*

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

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

19 *(4) For the last 10 years, fishery managers have*
20 *successfully been working to rebuild the red snapper*
21 *stock in the South Atlantic. There is currently record*
22 *high abundance and strong recruitment within the*
23 *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 mor-*
11 *talities include shorter seasons and broad area clo-*
12 *sures for the snapper-grouper fishery in the South At-*
13 *lantic.*

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) *\$5,100,000 has been invested in independent*
18 *survey data over the last three fiscal years, including*
19 *\$3,300,000 for the South Atlantic Great Red Snapper*
20 *Count to estimate the number of red snapper*
21 *(*Lutjanus campechanus*) in the South Atlantic waters*
22 *from North Carolina to Florida.*

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

1 *expeditiously as possible to better inform fishery man-*
2 *agement decisions.*

3 **(b) CONDITION ON ISSUANCE OF RULE.**—*The Admin-*
4 *istrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Adminis-*
5 *tration shall not issue an interim or final rule that includes*
6 *an area closure in the South Atlantic for species managed*
7 *under the Snapper-Grouper Fishery Management Plan*
8 *until—*

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

11 *(2) the data related to that study is integrated*
12 *into the upcoming South Atlantic red snapper re-*
13 *search track and operational stock assessment.*

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