June 4, 2025

The Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Secretary Lutnick,

We write today to jointly request state management of red snapper and other reef fishes in the South Atlantic. Federal management is driven by flawed data and regulations that threaten the economies of our coastal communities. Our states are committed to helping our recreational fishing communities, while also conserving our fisheries resources for future generations. The first step to correcting course on federal mismanagement is to stop the harmful impacts of Amendment 59 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region.

As Governors of coastal states, we are fortunate to boast over 8,500 miles of shoreline along our combined Atlantic coastlines. This geographic position supports each of our state's economic competitiveness and quality of life, and that includes abundant natural resources within the South Atlantic Fishery. Unfortunately, decades of inaction by career bureaucrats within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), combined with actions in the waning hours of the Biden Administration to cut-off public access to the fishery, have hampered access for our recreational angling communities from exercising their God-given right to fish and support their local economies and way of life.

We are thankful to you and President Trump for your willingness to empower states to assume management of their own natural resources, including red snapper, in the South Atlantic. Look no further than to Florida's own success in proving just how effective state management is. Since assuming management in the Gulf of America, Florida's recreational Red Snapper season has increased from just 3 to 127 days.

For too long, management of Atlantic red snapper has failed to keep track with the successful growth of the stock. Although fishermen have seen explosive growth in the number of red snapper, harvest opportunities have dwindled, and NOAA Fisheries has threatened to prohibit all snapper-grouper fishing along a portion of our coastline as part of Amendment 59.

The current situation in the South Atlantic is clear: 1) there is an unprecedented abundance of red snapper; 2) red snapper is no longer overfished or undergoing overfishing, and 3) a large quota increase is warranted. While prior leadership at the Department has struggled with accepting these facts, our states are equipped to effectively manage the stock to balance public access to the resource while maintaining a healthy stock for the long-term health of our fishery.

This presents an extraordinary opportunity to make state management in the Atlantic a resounding success, much like in the Gulf of America, where southern states have proven that utilizing state-led management, sound data, and prudent decision making have allowed the fishery to thrive.

To that end, please consider this letter as a joint formal request on behalf of our angling communities for a new Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to jumpstart state management of red snapper and other reef fishes in the South Atlantic as soon as possible. In Florida, this could be implemented within the year, with both Georgia and South Carolina to follow. This would mirror the method used by Gulf states in assuming management of red snapper in the Gulf of America.

Empowering our states to manage our own resources will negate the harmful impacts sought through Amendment 59 and allow our recreational anglers to access the fishery using sound science and proven techniques.

Thank you for your commitment to supporting Americans' rights on the water. We welcome and look forward to your partnership in advancing state management forward for the benefit of anglers, our economy, and way of life.

Sincerely,

Governor Ron DeSantis
State of Florida

Governor Brian Kemp
State of Georgia

Governor Henry Dargan McMaster
State of South Carolina