

Resolution

FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION RESOLUTION REGARDING EMERGENCY RELIEF FOR THE COMMERCIAL REEF FISH LONGLINE FISHERY IN THE GULF OF MEXICO

WHEREAS, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is a duly constituted governmental agency, created to serve the Great State of Florida, and

WHEREAS, said Commission's responsibility includes the protection and management of Florida's fish and wildlife and

WHEREAS, interactions between the reef fish longline gear and sea turtles in the eastern Gulf of Mexico have increased to levels that require federal emergency management action, and

WHEREAS, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and the National Marine Fisheries Service are implementing an Emergency Rule that will move the reef fish longline gear boundary out to the 50-fathom line off of the Florida coast in the eastern Gulf of Mexico to reduce interactions between sea turtles and long line gear, and

WHEREAS, the commercial reef fish longline fleet generally operates inside the 50-fathom boundary to harvest economically important species of grouper, and

WHEREAS, moving the commercial reef fish longline gear boundary to 50-fathoms will effectively close down the use of longline gear in the reef fish fishery, and

WHEREAS, the commercial reef fish longline fleet in the eastern Gulf of Mexico accounts for approximately 65 percent of the commercially caught reef fish, which are mainly composed of grouper species, landed in Florida, and

WHEREAS, the commercial reef fish longline industry and commercial seafood dealers dependent upon reef fish harvest are an important source of fresh grouper to Florida's seafood industry and restaurants, and

WHEREAS, the reef fish longline fleet will have to convert to a different gear type to remain in business, and

WHEREAS, this federal emergency action will create an economic hardship on the commercial reef fish longline industry and related commercial seafood dealers so as to create a "commercial fishery failure" within the meaning of the Magnuson-Steven Act provision on Fisheries Disaster Relief (18 U.S. C. § 1861a) ; and

WHEREAS, the Magnuson-Stevens Act authorizes the Secretary of Commerce, at the request of the Governor of the affected state, to provide fisheries disaster relief funds to assist a fishing community, such as the commercial reef fish longline industry and related commercial seafood dealers, affected by a "commercial fishing failure"; and

NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at a duly constituted and assembled meeting as follows:



Florida Fish
and Wildlife
Conservation
Commission

1. We find that the above emergency management actions are likely to cause serious economic hardships on the commercial reef fish longline industry and related commercial seafood dealers possibly jeopardizing their financial solvency so as to be a "commercial fishery failure" within the meaning of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (18 U. S.C. § 1861a).
2. We find that the above management actions are being implemented as a federal emergency response to address impacts on sea turtles under very limited deadlines.
3. We find that the commercial reef fish longline industry possibly could accommodate the federal emergency management actions by transitioning to different fishing gear types and methods as an alternative to established longline methods.
4. We find that such a transition to different gear types and methods could adequately address turtle bycatch issues.
5. We find that such a transition to different gear types and methods under such limited time frames cannot be accomplished unless significant federal assistance is available.
6. We understand that, under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, fisheries disaster relief can be sought by the Governor of the State of Florida.

We do hereby record the sentiments of this resolution forevermore in the minutes and records of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission that we hereby request the Governor of the State of Florida to submit a request to the United States Secretary of Commerce to declare a "commercial fishery failure" for Florida's Gulf of Mexico commercial reef fish longline industry and related commercial seafood dealers and provide appropriate federal disaster relief.

DONE AND RESOLVED at Tallahassee, Florida this 16th day of April, 2009.

FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE
CONSERVATION COMMISSION

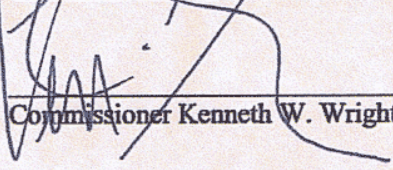


Chairman Rodney Barreto

Commissioner Ron Bergeron



Commissioner Brian S. Yablonski



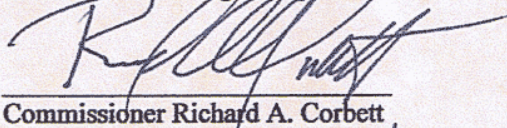
Commissioner Kenneth W. Wright



Vice-Chair Kathy Barco



Commissioner Dwight Stephenson



Commissioner Richard A. Corbett

Attest: 

