

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

KAY IVEY
GOVERNOR



STATE CAPITOL
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130

(334) 242-7100
FAX: (334) 242-3282

STATE OF ALABAMA

June 2, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20230

Re: Request for Additional Days of the Federal Red Snapper Season

Dear President Trump:

I am very concerned about the extremely short 3-day federal recreational red snapper season that has been announced by the National Marine Fisheries Service. The red snapper fishery is vitally important to the State of Alabama. On average, approximately 40% of the red snapper landed in the Gulf of Mexico recreationally are landed in Alabama. The economic impact of this abbreviated season to the Gulf Coast, and especially Alabama, is immense.

I ask you to reevaluate this decision and intervene on this issue for the 2017 season. Specifically, I respectfully request that you instruct the National Marine Fisheries Service to extend the 2017 Federal Red Snapper Season.

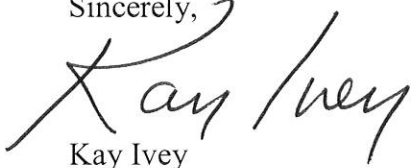
We feel the federal data collection system being used to account for the landings of red snapper is flawed. It overestimates the harvest of red snapper landed in Alabama and has resulted in this inadequate season length. The State of Alabama has implemented a peer-reviewed landings system for red snapper that showed approximately 821,000 pounds of red snapper were landed in Alabama in 2016, while the federal system showed over 2.1 million pounds were landed. In 2015, Alabama Snapper Check estimated 817,000 pounds were landed and the federal estimate was 1.7 million pounds. Results from 2014 were very similarly disproportionate with Alabama estimating 356,000 pounds and NOAA estimating 951,000 pounds.

The population of this valuable species is thriving. The average size fish caught last year was nine pounds compared to three pounds less than a decade ago. The federal management has not kept up with the rapid rebuilding success of this stock. The stock assessment for this species is several years behind and does not adequately represent the current population. A \$10-million Gulf-wide red snapper population estimate is underway utilizing the methods perfected in Alabama but those results will not be available for two years.

The cities and communities that depend on proper management and access to this fishery deserve to have a season that fairly represents the population of this species. We cannot wait for years for the federal science and data collection to catch up while our communities and fishermen suffer. I urge you to expand the recreational red snapper season to include all Friday, Saturdays, and Sundays in June, July, and August as well as July 3 and 4 for the 2017 season. The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources will diligently monitor the landings of red snapper in Alabama and provide summary information to the National Marine Fisheries Service in a timely manner to evaluate the effectiveness of this extended season.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to working with you and moving forward on this critical issue to the State of Alabama.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kay Ivey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "K".

Kay Ivey
Governor

Cc: Secretary Wilbur Ross,
US Department of Commerce
Acting Commissioner Christopher M. Blankenship,
Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources