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Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance Statement on the introduction of the *Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act*

*Gulf of Mexico commercial fishermen appreciate Representative Huffman's efforts
and look forward to maintaining core pillars of Magnuson-Stevens Fishery
Conservation and Management Act.*

GALVESTON, TX – Eric Brazer, Deputy Director of the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance (Shareholders' Alliance), released the following statement on today's introduction of the *Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act*:

"Commercial reef fish fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico are encouraged to see the *Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act* uphold core tenets of our nation's world-class fishery management system: science-based annual catch limits; strong accountability measures; accurate and precise data systems; and a public and transparent stakeholder-driven process. These four pillars are what make the *Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act* (MSA) a gold standard for environmentally sound fisheries management,

ensuring that commercial fishermen, like our members, can continue to run sustainable and successful fishing businesses that help feed Americans.

The *Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act* proposes changes to address some important issues that impact the health of fish stocks on which commercial fishing families depend. Guidance proposed by the Act would provide fishery managers a roadmap for incorporating a changing climate, dynamic oceans, and the growing importance of the intersection between land and sea into more meaningful policy.

Appointees to the Regional Fishery Management Councils (Councils) take an oath to uphold the MSA. We are heartened to see additional measures that ensure Council members' votes are transparent and clearly documented for the public benefit.

The Shareholders' Alliance appreciates Representative Huffman for his leadership developing legislative guidelines designed to improve, integrate, and ensure consistent recreational catch data. The Gulf of Mexico continues to struggle with managing its private angler sector. We are learning that a lack of comparable and consistent recreational datasets may be masking massive overfishing by this user group. We hope the *Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act* can help address this problem, leading to more efficient management and continued improved access for private anglers that won't risk the rebuilding progress we have made; or take opportunities away from highly-accountable commercial fishermen. The Shareholders' Alliance looks forward to working with Representative Huffman to protect the integrity of our fishery management process and to ensure that its scientific underpinnings are credible and statistically valid. We must also ensure that revised and updated data are not used in the management process to bypass existing allocation consideration requirements and avoid critical accountability measures.

The most effective way to ensure a healthy Gulf for future generations is to defend and sustain strong ocean protection laws, like the MSA, that hold all fishermen, managers, and scientists accountable. The Shareholders' Alliance thanks Representative Huffman and his staff for the stakeholder-driven process developed and executed to guide the development of the *Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act*, including listening sessions in the Gulf and across the country. The result of his efforts is legislation that is a good first step to addressing some of today's challenges in fishery management. However, there is still work to be done to ensure proposed changes do not fundamentally alter or dilute the MSA, which has been integral to science-based, sustainable management that has bolstered America as a leader in this arena. We look forward to collaborating with Congress to ensure that the MSA continues its successful track record of rebuilding fish stocks, that the final version of the

Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act builds on the existing core of MSA, and that *all* stakeholders contribute to the conservation of our vital ocean resources so that our children and grandchildren can continue to enjoy them.”

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The Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance is the largest organization of commercial grouper and snapper fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico. We represent the interests of commercial fishermen and other stakeholders who want to bring sustainability and accountability to fisheries management, in addition to engaging in a variety of fisheries support and philanthropic endeavors.

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