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Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance Statement on The Great Red Snapper Count

*Gulf of Mexico commercial fishermen show optimism that cooperative research can
improve fishery science*

GALVESTON, TX – Eric Brazer, Deputy Director of the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance, released the following statement on the preliminary results of the Great Red Snapper Count (GRSC) that were announced today:

“We are encouraged to see the preliminary results of the Great Red Snapper Count indicate that the biomass of red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico may be larger than previously estimated. We want to thank all of the regional partners and federal leaders that helped bring this program to fruition.

“For years, commercial fishermen have known that there was a big portion of the red snapper population 'out in the mud' in the 'uncharacterized' habitat that wasn't being picked up by the NOAA Fisheries stock assessment. But we don't fault NOAA Fisheries for this – stock assessments are time-consuming and extremely expensive, especially when repeating them regularly to generate a good time series of data.

“The GRSC takes cooperative research to a whole new level. It is an impressive effort with more than 80 scientists and more than a dozen academic and scientific research partners; however, it is only a single snapshot in time for a single species and carries with it a price tag of \$12,000,000. We firmly believe in the power of cooperative research and hope that this program will lead to additional conversations about how to improve data accuracy and precision while still keeping costs manageable.

“Just like any scientific work, the GRSC must be meticulously reviewed and validated to ensure its credibility and integrity. We look forward to a thorough analysis of the GRSC by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council’s Science and Statistical Committee and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center of NOAA Fisheries. If validated, we look forward to working with our partners in the Gulf of Mexico and leaders in Washington D.C. to help champion more sound citizen science opportunities.”

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The Shareholders’ Alliance is the largest organization of commercial grouper and snapper fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico.

We work hard to ensure that our fisheries are sustainably managed so our fishing businesses can thrive and our fishing communities can exist for future generations.

We are the harvesters that provide much of the American public with a reliable source of domestically caught wild Gulf seafood, and we do this through a philosophy that sustainable seafood and profitable fishing businesses depend on healthy fish populations.

www.shareholdersalliance.org

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