Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 2, 2012

Acting Secretary Rebecca Blank
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Acting Secretary Blank,

As you are aware, several Louisiana State Senators have requested that you send Dr. Roy Crabtree, the regional administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Service's Southeast Regional Office, along with his support staff of scientists, to appear before the Louisiana Senate Committee on Natural Resources to discuss the current situation surrounding the red snapper fishery in the Gulf of Mexico.

We encourage you to accept this request in order to open a dialogue with state officials about how NOAA and the State of Louisiana can move forward together to address the catch limits being placed on Louisiana's red snapper fishery. The issues surrounding the red snapper fishery in the Gulf of Mexico are very important to the State of Louisiana, and we request that you give this issue your immediate and focused attention so that the current deteriorating situation between the states and NOAA is not exacerbated.

We look forward to your prompt response, and further request that you provide us with answers to the following background questions/requests for information regarding this issue:

(1) Please provide information pertaining to the justification for and jurisdictional authority for the issuance of the emergency rule published in the Federal Register on March 25, 2013 regarding the recreational closure authority specific to federal waters off the coast of Louisiana for the recreational red snapper component of the Gulf of Mexico reef fish fishery;

(2) What methodology is utilized to determine the length, allocations, and quotas for the red snapper season?

(3) What plans does your department have for the future allocations and quotas of red snapper?

(4) Please provide an update on the regional and Gulf of Mexico red snapper stock assessments on natural and artificial habitats;

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(5) Please provide information pertaining to the current general conditions and health of the Gulf red snapper fishery, as well as National Marine Fisheries Service projections;

(6) What is required of the State of Louisiana to garner additional allocations or quotas based on the state's management of the red snapper fishery?

Sincerely,

David Vitter
United States Senator

Bill Cassidy
United States Congressman

CC:
Regional Administrator Dr. Robert Crabtree
NOAA Fisheries Service
Southeast Regional Office
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701