



**Testimony before the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
Chad Hanson, Senior Policy Analyst, Pew Environment Group**

February 3, 2010

RE: Final Regulatory Amendment for Reef Fish Total Allowable Catch

Good afternoon, Chairman Shipp and members of the Gulf Council. Thank you for the opportunity to address you again today. My name is Chad Hanson, with the Pew Environment Group's Campaign to End Overfishing in the Southeast.

The recent stock assessment is a strong indication that the red snapper population in the Gulf of Mexico is on the road to recovery, and as a result, an increase in the red snapper catch limit is appropriate.

However, there is a history of large overruns of the recreational ACL for red snapper in recent years.

Thus, we strongly urge you to set the increased catch limit at a level that accounts for the difficulty of keeping the recreational sector within the established limits.

To address this issue for red snapper and for grouper, we urge the Council to continue to explore new tools such as fish tags or stamp programs to more effectively collect information and improve management of the recreational sector, whether it be through Amendment 32 or incorporated into a separate amendment. Ultimately, more effective management is a critical component to ensure the long term health of fish populations in the Gulf.

We also urge the Council to address this issue by applying the Annual Catch Target control rule under development as part of the Generic ACL Amendment to red snapper and other species such as gag and red grouper once the rule is fully developed.

When a popular fishery like red snapper begins to rebuild, there is always the temptation to quickly and dramatically increase catch limits.

However, it is vitally important that the Council stay the course on the rebuilding plan to ensure that this species can make a full recovery. If you do so, catch levels may be much higher than we see today.

Thanks again for the opportunity to share our thoughts on this subject.

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