

*April 16-19 the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council will, once again, be addressing the issue of Sector Separation of the Recreational Sector into 2 or 3 components. Those groups, if 2, will be private anglers and for-hire operators. The latter may be split further into subsectors of Charter boats and Head boats. This particular meeting will not only be addressing this subject, but also determining if they are going to implement Pilot Programs in the charter and head boat components which will, in themselves be a form of sector separation and catch shares for these two groups.*

*The true purpose of Sector Separation is to have more governmental control over the Recreational Sector so that Catch Shares can be implemented. Catch Shares do not help rebuild a fishery; what they do is reduce participation in the fishery. Why would any angler on the Gulf, after having so many decreases in seasons and bag limits want a further decrease in their access to their fishery? They don't.*

*We will be submitting more detailed comments at the Gulf Council meeting, but were asked by several how they could send comments regarding these subjects themselves, and requested a sample letter. The sample letter opposing these programs is below:*

To: Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council

From:

Regarding: Sector Separation and Catch Shares

It has come to my attention that Sector Separation and Catch Shares are being considered for the Gulf of Mexico Recreational Fishery by the Gulf Council in the meetings scheduled April 16 to 19, 2012. I am opposed to both. As I understand it, Sector Separation will divide our Fishery between private anglers, for-hire charter boats, and possibly further to head boats. Because there is no definitive way to decide what would be fair and equitable to all parties, it would not be in anyone's best interest to divide this fishery. All of us are recreational anglers. We work together quite well to determine what is best for us. Our mode of transportation to the fishery is different, private boats vs. For-hire boats, but we are all fishing for the fun experience and to have some fresh fish for our families.

I am opposed to Catch Shares. Catch Shares in other Fisheries throughout the U.S. and in our Commercial Fishery in the Gulf have simply been a way to reduce participation in the Fishery. That may make management easier, but it eliminates jobs and small businesses. Our Natural Resource, our fish, belongs to the Nation, not just a few who can afford the increase in cost that will come with the implementation of Catch Shares.

Our Gulf Fishery is rebuilding more quickly than anyone could have imagined 10 years ago, and it is due to the cooperation of the commercial and recreational anglers with the Gulf Council decisions. With the Red Snapper Fishery rebounding so well, and the fishing seasons and bag limits continuing to be reduced, there needs to be serious changes in the modeling that determines the acceptable biological catch, so that, as the Fishery continues to rebuild, the fishermen (and women) may increase their participation, not decrease.

It is best for the Nation and our community, as long as a Fishery continues to rebuild, to allow communities to continue and even increase their fishing effort. It improves the economy by, not only putting more passengers on for-hire boats, but selling and manufacturing boats, selling fuel, bait, ice, tackle, increasing tourism, improving numbers in restaurants and hotels, which increases bed taxes, and in so many other ways.

Please consider this letter as my vote against Catch Shares and Sector Separation in the Gulf of Mexico Recreational Fishery.

Sincerely,