Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 27, 2012

Dr. Roy Crabtree
Regional Administrator
NOAA Fisheries Service
Southeast Regional Office
263 13th Avenue South
Saint Petersburg, Florida 33701

Dear Dr. Crabtree:

We are writing to encourage you to extend the 40-day red snapper season, a window that is too short to make a living and being made shorter by devastating summer weather. Although many of our districts are separated by hundreds of miles and varied interests, we are all stakeholders in the fight to preserve the proud fishing heritage of our local communities.

We have heard from charter boat operators and private anglers in our districts who are concerned that the extensive damage caused by Tropical Storm Debby, along with the summer storms that could occur in the days ahead, will leave them with far too few days to fish. With this crippling blow to our local economies, however, comes a timely opportunity for the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council to build good will with our fishermen.

For these reasons, we strongly request that you consider extending this year's 40-day red snapper season until the end of July, which coincides with the peak of our tourism season. We believe that this decisive action is reasonable and will go a long way toward relieving the crippling economic burden facing our fishermen and the ancillary businesses that rely on the season for increased tourism and revenue.

Small boat owners and charter boat operators alike have now lost the majority of their season. Private anglers are telling us that they have been able to fish just a time or two this season, making it difficult to fund the hundreds of dollars necessary for each trip's fuel, bait, tackle and supplies. Making matters worse, these hard hit, low-lying areas can likely expect another four or five days of bad weather before the red snapper season closes. The end result will be that many of our fishermen will be left with a fishing window that could be up to 75% shorter than the already insufficient 40-day season.

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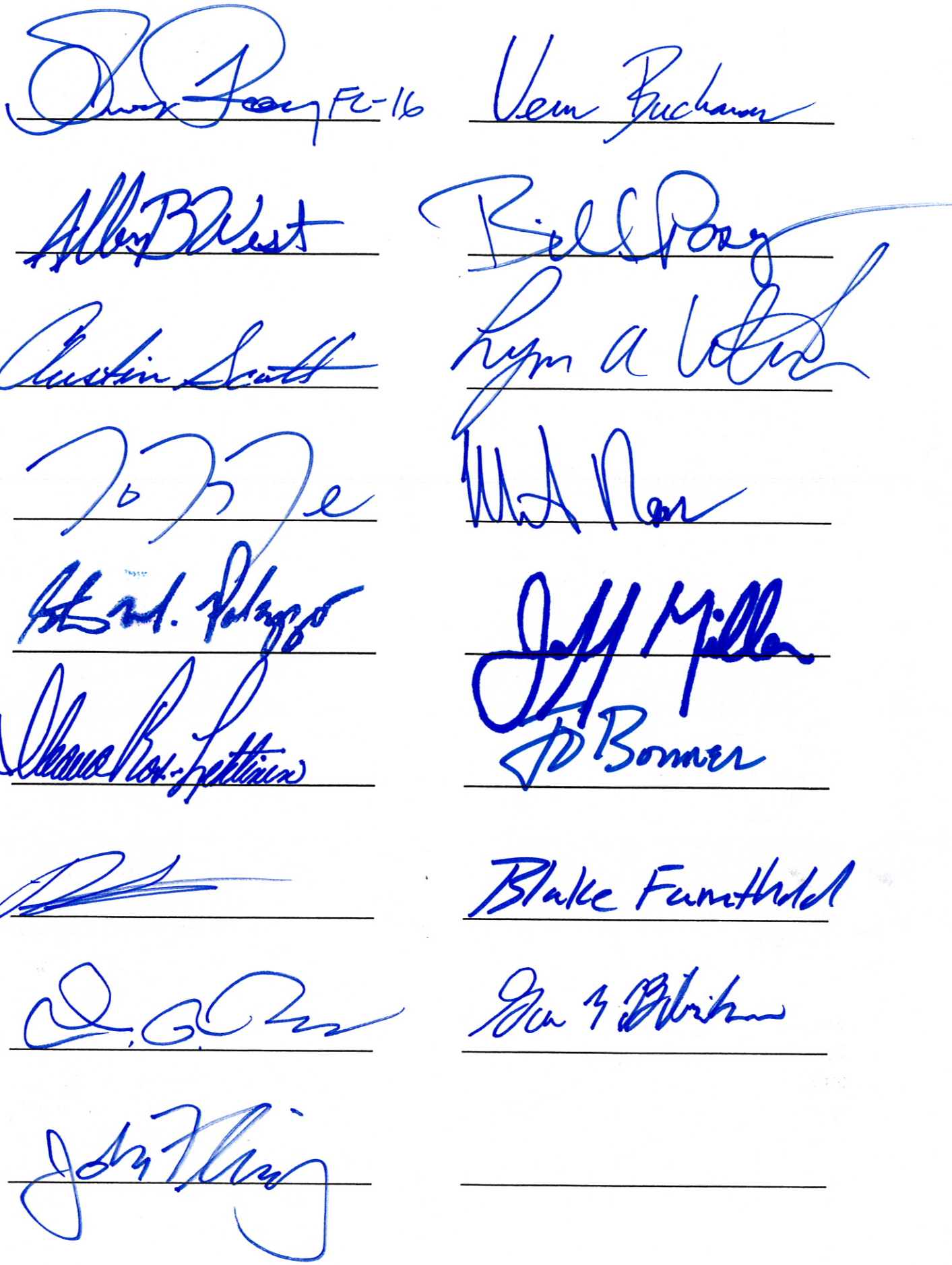
It is with this information that we ask you to extend the red snapper season an additional 21 days, through the end of July. We look forward to working with you to strengthen our Gulf fisheries while, at the same time, allowing our fishermen and coastal industries to prosper.

Thank you for your timely consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Steve Southerland, II
Member of Congress

Jeff Landry
Member of Congress

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