



The International Game Fish Association

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February 21, 2022

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Re: Amendment 10 to the Fishery Management Plan for South Atlantic Dolphin and Wahoo (NOAA-NMFS-2021-0093)

Mr. Nikhil Mehta
Southeastern Regional Office, NMFS
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
Nikhil.mehta@noaa.gov

Dear Mr. Mehta,

Please accept this letter as public comment on behalf of the International Game Fish Association, an organization representing national and international anglers. The IGFA is part of a large coalition of fishing and boating stakeholders that sent a letter to NOAA Fisheries Assistant Administrator Janet Coit in January, with thousands of signatures from anglers who signed the *Save The Mahi* petition, objecting to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's approval of Amendment 10 as written.

Despite the prolific growth, distribution, and spawning capacity of dolphinfish, a clear downward trend in catch rates in both recreational and commercial landings is occurring and should be a major cause for concern. Dolphinfish are one of, if not the most important species to offshore recreational anglers throughout the South Atlantic and, in Florida alone, over one million anglers inject over nine billion dollars into the economy. These anglers have taken notice of declining interactions, especially with large dolphin, as witnessed by the outpouring from this community in the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's public comment section for Amendment 10. These anglers are calling for increased conservation efforts in the form of stricter limits in the fishery to maintain sustainable catch rates and a healthy population of dolphin along our coast.

We recommend the following measures to maximize stock sustainability, recreational opportunities, and economic stability to the stakeholders reliant upon the dolphin fishery:

- Disapprove recommendations for Action 1 and designate the most recent 14 years of landings data as BSIA to find the updated ABC
- Reduce the recreational vessel limit for dolphinfish to 30 fish
- Create a 2,000-pound commercial trip limit
- Maintain the current 10-fish per angler bag limit
- Implement a 20-inch minimum for all areas it does not already exist
- Disapprove final recommendations for Action 11 and explore a vessel limit that is both sustainable and equitable for all resource users

Jason Schratwieser
IGFA President

The International Game Fish Association is a nonprofit organization committed to the conservation of game fish and the promotion of responsible, ethical angling practices through science, education, rule making, record keeping and recognition of outstanding accomplishments in the field of angling.