

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

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Opening Statement
Ranking Member Stacey Plaskett
Subcommittee on the Interior entitled
Examining the Management of Red Snapper Fishing in the Gulf of Mexico
May 2, 2017

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this important hearing. I greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss an issue that does not get the attention it deserves.

Federal law has helped to save the Red Snapper. Before 2006, this species – prized by recreational and commercial fishermen alike, faced overfishing, a steep decline in population, and the possibility of extinction.

The cooperation between fishermen and regulatory agencies, within the framework of the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, has largely brought back the Red Snapper. It is due to this success that we can hold today's hearing.

Representing a jurisdiction located in the Caribbean, the fishing industry is an important part of our economy; both in the commercial and recreational sphere. However, we do not have the same issues as the Gulf of Mexico because we operate on an annual catch limit as opposed to a quota system, which is set by the National Marine Fisheries for Economic Exclusive Zones.

We do not have a formal recreational fishing program and recreational fishermen are not required to be licensed. However, one of our main issues pertains to sports fishing (mainly sport fishing for marlins) in the British Virgin Islands, where the BVI government has increased the licensing fee so drastically that it is having a negative impact on our once thriving sport fishing industry. Perhaps, Mr. Chairman, we can work together on this issue.

I look forward to hearing from some of those voices today, and I view this hearing as the beginning of a discussion on how we allow greater access to the Red Snapper fishery while ensuring that this important – and still overfished – stock continues to rebuild.

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