



RICK SCOTT
GOVERNOR

March 15, 2012

Mr. Samuel D. Rauch III
Acting Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway
Room 14636
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear Mr. Rauch:

In response to your request for nominations to the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (Council), my office consulted with members of recreational and commercial fishing interests. These discussions highlighted the importance of saltwater fishing that support jobs and economic vitality in Florida, particularly in our coastal communities. We received recommendations and endorsements from numerous individuals and organizations who care deeply about management of our saltwater fisheries:

Bill Kelly, Florida Keys Commercial Fishermen
Bob Jones, Southeastern Fisheries Association
Bob Spaeth, Southern Offshore Fishing Association
Bob Zales, Panama City Boatmen Association
Glen Brooks, Gulf Fishermen's Association
Janie Thomas, Shrimp Producers Association
Jerry Andrews, Pensacola Charter Boat Association
Jerry Sansom, Organized Fishermen of Florida
Rick Roberts, Snook and Gamefish Foundation
Russell Hudson, Directed Sustainable Fisheries

After careful consideration of each applicant, I am pleased to nominate the individuals listed below for the obligatory seat, currently held by Benjamin C. Hartig III. All of these nominees are well qualified for their sector and would make excellent candidates for appointment to the Council. Given the serious challenges facing saltwater fishery management in the State of Florida, I am providing my nominations in order of preference and ask that you give strong consideration to the preferred nominee.

Mr. Samuel D. Rauch III
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
March 15, 2012
Page Two

I am recommending past Council chairman and current vice-chairman, **Mr. Benjamin C. Hartig III**, as the preferred choice for the obligatory seat on the Council. Mr. Hartig has been involved in the commercial fishing industry since 1966. Mr. Hartig previously served as chairman of the South Atlantic Snapper/Grouper and Mackerel Advisory Panels prior to being nominated to the Council. He is also a past member of Organized Fishermen of Florida, the Florida League of Anglers, and the Coastal Conservation Association. Mr. Hartig's reputation and presence in the Florida fishing community has led to overwhelming support from both commercial and recreational fishing organizations from around the state.

It is my understanding that you are also seeking nominations for two at-large seats on the Council in addition to the obligatory seat. I am submitting the following nominees for your consideration for all three of these vacancies.

Robert A. Johnson is the owner and operator of Jodie Lynn Sportfishing Charters in St. Augustine, Florida. He has over 30 years of experience working in the saltwater fishing industry. Mr. Johnson currently serves on the South Atlantic Snapper/Grouper Advisory Panel and the steering committee for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's red snapper tagging program. In addition, he regularly participates in fishery research trips with the University of Florida. As a small business owner for over 20 years, Mr. Johnson offers first-hand fisheries experience as a Council member.

Michael S. Merrifield is the owner and operator of Cape Canaveral Shrimp Company and Wild Ocean Seafood Market. A lifelong recreational fisherman, Mr. Merrifield has over eight years of commercial shrimp fishing experience. He is currently a member of the Southeastern Fisheries Association and the South Atlantic Deepwater Shrimp Advisory Panel. Before becoming a commercial fisherman, Mr. Merrifield worked for over 20 years in the field of information technology. He received a bachelor's degree in biology from Lindenwood University.

In summary, my recommendations are as follows:

1. Benjamin C. Hartig III – Commercial Fishing
2. Robert A. Johnson – Charter/Recreational Fishing
3. Michael S. Merrifield – Commercial Fishing

Mr. Samuel D. Rauch III
South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
March 15, 2012
Page Three

I appreciate your consideration of my nominations for Council appointments and look forward to seeing citizens of Florida continue their service on the Council in ways that will help ensure wise and sustainable use of our valuable saltwater fishery resources. Regrettably, I am unable, after diligent search, to submit a minority candidate at this time. Please contact my office if you have questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott", written in a cursive style.

Rick Scott
Governor

RS/nj

Enclosures
cc: Mr. Nick Wiley