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TROY ROMERO
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Appropriations
Natural Resources and Environment
Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget
House Select Committee
on Homeland Security

September 22, 2023

Robert Shadoin, Secretary
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
PO Box 98000
2000 Quail Dr.
Baton Rouge, LA 70898

Secretary Shadoin,

I am writing to you today to make you aware that I have been inundated with calls and text concerning the fish kills 2 weeks ago in Cameron Parish. During the week of September 11-15, our coastal areas were impacted by three separate menhaden net spills or tears, possibly caused by Omega Protein and Daybrook Fisheries. Our area beaches like Holly Beach and Rutherford beach were covered with rotting carcasses of menhaden and other bycatch. That bycatch included many large redfish, which as we understand, are experiencing challenges across our coast, to the point where recreational limits are being lowered. While I am certainly aware of natural fish kills that occur during the hot summer months, I also understand my constituents concerns with the menhaden boats being right directly off shore. I have received many pictures of the large vessels close to the beaches.

Unfortunately, it seems that these are not rare or isolated incidents. My constituents claim that these beaches are covered with dead fish multiple times per summer after menhaden boats have been in the area fishing near the beaches. The net tears from last week come almost exactly one year after an entire net containing roughly 500,000 pounds of menhaden was cut by Omega Protein near Holly Beach, causing an enormous fish kill and a dangerous hazard. In July, a Daybrook Fisheries vessel was cited for illegally harvesting 86,000 pounds of menhaden from restricted waters. In both of these cases, the offending companies made public apologies, ensuring us that these incidents were rare, and were the result of poor decisions by their ship captains. Yet, here we are again, faced with more ecological damage and more concerned, frustrated constituents.

It is very difficult for me to understand and explain to my constituents how we as a state can reduce the limits of recreational anglers in the name of protecting certain species, but allow the commercial industry to kill thousands of fish with no recourse. It is also important to consider why all other coastal states in the union have restricted commercial menhaden

fishing, but Louisiana does very little to restrict this activity. I want to make myself perfectly clear, I have no intention of crippling the menhaden industry, but I agree that something needs to be done to bridge the gap between the recreational industry and the commercial industry. I think we as a state can come together to solve this problem.

I urge you to consider action to ensure that our beaches and fisheries are protected from future incidents like this. Extending the menhaden harvest buffer zone would be one example. I also know that SB447 by Senator Hensgens will require a study by Wildlife and Fisheries to be presented to the joint natural resources committee in February of 2024. It is my hope the science will produce information that will allow the commercial industry and the recreational fishermen to finally come together with a plan to remediate the situation. It is of utmost importance that as a state with an abundance of natural resources, we continue to make wise science based decisions to protect all of Louisiana.

Thank you for your efforts to protect our fisheries and our shoreline habitats.



Troy D. Romero
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