

## **Genesis 1:26 Project — Game Fish Status**

### **Newsletter Volume No. 2**

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#### **“Stand Down”**

Today, recreational fishermen across the South Atlantic were told to stand down.

Families prepared to fish. Boats were fueled. Trips were planned. Hopes were high after public announcements that expanded recreational red snapper access was finally coming to Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. Many people believed this was finally a step toward returning part of the fishery back to the public.

Then, before many fishermen even left the dock, the season was stopped.

For many Americans, this moment became much bigger than red snapper.

It became the moment the recreational public suddenly realized something deeply troubling:

The fishery itself may not belong to the people in the way they once believed.

That realization is why people are upset today.

Not simply because a season was canceled, but because many fishermen, families, and coastal communities are beginning to recognize the growing conflict between public trust fisheries and a management system increasingly centered around allocation, commercialization, and competing claims over wild natural resources.

The Genesis 1:26 Project was created for exactly this moment.

This is not about anger.

This is about education, stewardship, long-term sustainability, and restoring a viable recreational fishery for future generations.

The Genesis 1:26 Project believes there is still a lawful and historically proven pathway forward:

Game Fish Status.

Two simple words.

A conservation principle already reflected across all 50 states through wildlife and freshwater fisheries protections designed to preserve long-term public access, stewardship, and sustainability.

For decades, Americans accepted game animal and game fish protections because history already taught us what happens when wild resources are treated primarily as commodities. Buffalo, deer, turkey, ducks, freshwater fish, and countless other species were protected through conservation frameworks centered around public trust and long-term stewardship.

Saltwater fisheries are now facing that same moment in history.

The public is beginning to realize that many of our saltwater fish are still managed primarily through commercial allocation frameworks, even while recreational fishermen face shrinking seasons, shrinking limits, shrinking access, and declining fish populations.

Today's red snapper shutdown brought that reality directly into public view.

Many fishermen are now beginning to recognize the same pattern both offshore in federal waters and closer to shore in Georgia state waters.

Offshore, in federal waters, recreational fishermen were told to stand down in a fishery where red snapper populations are visibly abundant, while many surrounding reef fish populations within the broader grouper-snapper complex continue showing signs of decline. Fishermen increasingly question the condition of vermilion snapper, triggerfish, porgies, gag grouper, scamp grouper, and other reef-associated species that historically supported the broader offshore fishery.

Closer to shore, Georgia's Red Drum Town Hall revealed a similar pattern in state waters.

In Georgia's 0–3 mile state waters, the discussion surrounding red drum exposed the collapse of many of the foundational inshore fish stocks surrounding red drum itself. These resident and near-resident fish form the foundation of the coastal ecosystem and provide the diversification necessary for a sustainable recreational fishery.

The problem in both cases is not simply one fish.

The problem is attempting to manage a single species inside a declining ecosystem.

At the same time, foundational inshore fish populations continue disappearing from our coastal waters. Many of these fish have been deregulated, minimized, or treated as insignificant under *de minimis* classifications, even though they form the foundation of the ecosystem supporting larger recreational fish populations.

Without diversification, pressure collapses onto the few remaining fish still capable of supporting recreational effort.

That is exactly what we are now witnessing with red drum.

What many fishermen are now beginning to recognize is that the same pattern exists both in Georgia state waters and in federal waters offshore.

In Georgia's nearshore waters, the debate surrounding red drum has exposed the decline of the broader inshore ecosystem supporting red drum itself. Offshore, in federal waters, many fishermen are now seeing the same pattern emerge around red snapper and the broader grouper-snapper complex. While red snapper itself is being intensely managed, fishermen increasingly question the condition of the surrounding reef fish populations that historically supported the broader offshore fishery.

The problem in both cases is not simply one fish.

The problem is attempting to manage a single species inside a declining ecosystem.

This is why the distinction between resident fish and highly migratory pelagic fish matters. The Genesis 1:26 Project is not advocating Game Fish Status protections for wide-ranging pelagic species such as tuna, wahoo, or dolphin. The focus is on the resident and reef-associated fish that form the true foundation of long-term sustainability both in state and federal waters.

That is why the Genesis 1:26 Project continues calling for a broader public-trust conservation framework built around Game Fish Status protections for the resident and reef-associated fish that form the true foundation of long-term sustainability.

Without protecting the ecosystem surrounding the fish, there is no lasting future for the fish itself.

The public also increasingly recognizes another difficult reality: unlimited shrimp harvest effort in shallow coastal waters necessarily produces corresponding juvenile discard mortality. Historically, bycatch discussions in the Southeast have often involved ratios approaching ten pounds of bycatch for every pound of shrimp harvested.

Whether the exact ratio changes from year to year does not change the larger truth.

Millions of juvenile fish lost are still lost, whether they are counted after landing or discarded overboard.

If those losses are excluded from meaningful management consideration, then the public cannot reasonably expect long-term sustainability from the surrounding fishery itself.

This is not simply about conservation biology.

This is about the future of recreational opportunity in America.

Entire family traditions are now being impacted:

fathers,

mothers,

sons,

daughters,

grandparents,

and children who simply want the opportunity to fish together and experience the outdoors as previous generations once did.

The economic consequences are enormous as well. Recreational saltwater fishing supports coastal communities, tourism, hotels, restaurants, marinas, fuel docks, tackle shops, guides, boat manufacturers, and countless small businesses throughout the South Atlantic region.

What people are increasingly asking is simple:

Why are we sacrificing the long-term future of an entire recreational fishery and coastal culture for a management philosophy that continues prioritizing extraction while foundational fish populations decline around it?

Today's red snapper shutdown made that question impossible for many people to ignore.

The public was told to stand down.

Perhaps now the public will finally stand together instead.

Not in anger.

Not in division.

But in unity.

This movement leaves no one out.

It is built around the belief that our children and grandchildren deserve the same opportunity to fish, gather, and experience the outdoors that previous generations once enjoyed.

At one time, large-scale commercial harvest may have been considered necessary. Today, Americans have alternatives. What we no longer have are unlimited wild fish populations capable of absorbing unlimited extraction and unlimited discard mortality forever.

That is the reality now confronting the South Atlantic.

The original fisheries mandate was never written by government first.

It was written long ago in Genesis Chapter 1, Verse 26:

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

Dominion was never meant to mean destruction.

Dominion means stewardship.

The Genesis 1:26 Project exists to help educate the public about that responsibility and to provide a unified voice for those who believe our saltwater fisheries must be protected for future generations.

Game Fish Status is not a shortcut around stewardship. In many offshore fisheries, even recreational management alone presents real challenges because discard mortality can occur when fish are released from deep water. But what increasingly concerns the public is that recreational discard mortality is openly discussed and used to justify shrinking access, while the broader mortality surrounding commercial effort and ecosystem-level decline often appears far less visible within the public conversation.

Many fishermen now recognize the same concern in Georgia state waters, where the Red Drum Town Hall discussions indicated that shrimp trawl discard mortality would not be incorporated into the broader ecosystem rebuilding framework surrounding red drum itself.

That growing disconnect is exactly why so many people are now calling for a broader conservation framework centered around Game Fish Status, ecosystem stewardship, diversification, and long-term public trust sustainability rather than continued piecemeal management of individual species alone.

If this message speaks to you, we encourage you to:

- Read *The Saltwater Fisherman's New Testament*
- Visit [GoFishUSA.com](http://GoFishUSA.com)
- Join the Genesis 1:26 Project
- Sign up for future newsletters
- And most importantly, let your own voice be heard

Hope still exists.

Game Fish Status is our lawful and historic pathway forward.

Protect our saltwater fish.

Let the wild remain wild.