



February 19, 2021

Rodney Barreto, Chairman  
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission  
2590 Executive Center Circle E., Suite 201  
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Dear Chairman Barreto:

Please accept this letter as public comment on behalf of American Sportfishing Association, Bonefish Tarpon Trust, Coastal Conservation Association, Florida Keys Fishing Guides Association, Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation, International Game Fish Association, Lower Keys Guides Association, and Wild Oceans regarding spatial management of the multi-species spawning aggregation site, Western Dry Rocks, covered at the December 2020 Commission Meeting and in January 2021 workshops.

We are pleased to see the recommendation by FWC staff to revise the draft rule for Western Dry Rocks from a two-month seasonal closure to a four-month (April-July) seasonal closure, and we encourage your support of it on February 26. A four-month spawning season closure protects mutton snapper and permit during most of their spawning season. This action, along with already established bag-limits and size limits, will undoubtedly increase the health of the important inshore fishery for permit and offshore fishery for mutton snapper in the Florida Keys.

A four-month closure at Western Dry Rocks would be another great example of FWC's tradition of science-based fisheries management that fully considers stakeholder input and the important balance of fisheries access with natural resource sustainability. We are grateful for the time and resources FWC has allocated to such an important issue. We are hopeful that the Commission will finalize the four-month closure at the February Commission meeting.

Sincerely,

**Kellie Ralston**  
Southeast Fisheries Policy Director  
American Sportfishing Association

**Jim McDuffie**  
President & CEO  
Bonefish & Tarpon Trust

**Trip Aukeman**  
Director of Advocacy  
Coastal Conservation Association

**Dr. Guy Harvey**  
Founder and Owner  
Guy Harvey Enterprises Chairman  
Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation

**Capt. Steve Friedman**  
Commodore  
FL Keys Fishing Guides Association

**Jason Schratwieser**  
President  
International Game Fish Association

**Capt. Andrew Tipler**  
President  
Lower Keys Guides Association

**Rob Kramer**  
President  
Wild Oceans

cc: Commissioner Robert Spottswood, Commissioner Steven Hudson, Commissioner Gary Nicklaus, Commissioner Gary Lester, Commissioner Sonya Rood, Commissioner Michael Sole