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To whom it may concern.

I am writing this letter to express support for the proposal on lionfish mitigation as expressed by the Emerald Coast Reef Association.

Dive Pros is a Florida corporation in existence since October of 1988. Our company has trained tens of thousands of scuba divers throughout the years and have taken many more to visit and appreciate the underwater resources that we enjoy in the great state of Florida. We have always been an active citizen when it comes to protecting and enhancing our aquatic resources.

The BP oil spill was devastating at the time but the terrible stigma that we were to endure has seemed to subside.

A more recent threat has emerged and we believe it is one that will not heal with time. In fact every day we wait without proactive response is a day we get closer to the potential collapse of our local fisheries,

We in the panhandle of Florida have been witness to an outright invasion of the Red Lionfish. The numbers of these fishes are incredible. They are not acting as they do in their natural habitat and are outright taking over.

We have taken action. When they first arrived we offered a bounty on each fish, it soon became unsustainable for a small business to finance. We have sponsored and participated in numerous derbies and tournaments with some good results, but we need to do more.

This proposal may not be the final solution, but is a solid idea that will incentivize divers to remove these spikey invaders.

Please consider and approve a plan for lionfish mitigation.

Respectfully,

Kerry Freeland

Vice President Gulf Coast Pro Dive Inc. dba Dive Pros

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