FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Morgan L. McCord
March 6, 2015
850.212.5052

Tallahassee, Fla. - Florida's successful fishing industries support thousands of jobs and bolster the state economy, but the rapid growth of Florida's highly invasive lionfish population is a serious threat to the sector, according to an Economy Commentary from the nonpartisan Florida TaxWatch. On the heels of last week's National Invasive Species Awareness Week, the TaxWatch report highlights the vulnerability posed by non-native lionfish.

"Florida fishing provides jobs, local food and unique tourism experiences, which must be preserved as they are critical pieces of Florida's diversified economy," said Dominic M. Calabro, President and CEO of Florida TaxWatch. "By taking steps to control Florida's lionfish population, the state is protecting valuable Florida resources and needed jobs."

Florida's saltwater commercial fishing industry is the second-largest in the nation, and supports nearly 65,000 jobs, while saltwater recreational fishing is responsible for more than 109,000 jobs.

The report notes that the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is working to control the population of lionfish by encouraging lionfish removal in derbies around the state, promoting a lionfish reporting smartphone app, and prohibiting lionfish from being imported for aquariums.

Lionfish have no natural predators in Florida waters, and compete with other fish for food, while often feeding off of Florida's native fish populations, including snapper and grouper. The Florida red grouper fishing harvest totaled more than $15.1 million in 2010-11.

Read more about Florida's lionfish problem.

###