



PRESS RELEASE

Maryland Saltwater Sportfishermen's Association

8461C Fort Smallwood Road • Pasadena, MD 21122

Phone: 410-255-5535 • Fax: 410-255-1552

Email: fishmssa@aol.com • Website: www.mssa.net

Jan. 27, 2010

Protect your right to fish!
Join the RFA today www.JoinRFA.org



Recreational Fishing Alliance

News Alert - 1/27/10

RFA PUSHES FOR FLEXIBILITY BILL

"Unless We Unite...Sportfishing Is In Big Trouble"

When the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) closed the recreational amberjack fishery on October 24, it was essentially the shot heard round the American docks. NMFS had made a similar emergency closure on the black sea bass fishery in federal waters north of Cape Hatteras, NC just three weeks prior - a fishery which remains closed to recreational fishermen to this day - while the decision had already been made through NMFS and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council to close all bottom fishing in over 1000 square miles of coastal waters from North Carolina to Florida to protect and rebuild the red snapper populations.

In 2006, the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act (MSA) was passed in the Senate by "unanimous consent" - and signed into law by then President G.W. Bush soon after. The act of unanimous consent on the floor of the Senate officially sets aside rules of procedure so as to expedite proceedings. The quick passage of MSA in the Senate helped to memorialize Sen. Ted Stevens in the naming of our federal fisheries law before his departure from office, and it also facilitated the rapid progression of this broken federal fisheries law without any debate on the floor.

For the past five years, the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) has been quite vocal in its opposition to "time-specific" deadlines and the arbitrary, non-scientific provisions contained within MSA. The inflexibility of the fisheries law to respond to an ever-changing marine ecosystem coupled with grossly inadequate management information systems within our federal fisheries service is contributing to a major industry collapse which has been felt throughout our coastal communities. Through strict enforcement of the provisions of MSA, and the rapidly expanding denial of public access to rebuilt and rebuilding fisheries, it has become extremely clear to the majority of anglers and fishing organizations that the federal fisheries law must be fixed.

After spending nearly 10 years in the tackle industry as editor of one of America's leading recreational fishing publications, and now as managing director of the RFA, I'm often asked by friends and associates as to where the "industry" stands on the continued closures, overly restrictive regulations, and the ideological warfare brought upon our coastal communities by well-funded preservationists. The radical environmental movement funded by Pew Charitable Trusts

has helped alter fisheries rebuilding parameters and they've effectively redefined the term "overfishing" to allow for economically and socially destructive measures to be enacted upon rebuilding fish stocks. The bad news for anglers is that many of our national fishing organizations have aligned themselves with the ultra-conservation front in believing that MSA is working just fine, and that once fish stocks are rebuilt to "optimum yield" then everything will be alright.

In a [recent article at ESPN Outdoors](#), the Center for Coastal Conservation (CCC) said "we do not believe a legislative 'fix' that permits continued overfishing indefinitely is the way to go," while adding that instead of fixing Magnuson, RFA's efforts "would be better focused on creating free markets for catch shares, leveraged buyouts to right-size overcapitalized fleets, and implementing economic and science-supported fisheries management decisions that put the resource first."

The RFA's message back to CCC, and its "institutional sustainers" and partners at the American Sportfishing Association, the Billfish Foundation, the Coastal Conservation Association, the International Game Fish Association and the National Marine Manufacturers Association is this: our recreational fishing community remains [steadfastly and vehemently opposed to catch shares](#) and any other privatization schemes which attempt to eliminate open access fishing to the exclusion of the American fishing public. Furthermore, to "put the resource first" is a tired cliché; recreational fishermen, like all sportsman, have always "put the resource first." The fact is that a fishery resource can only be defined as a resource if you have both the fish and the fishermen - simply put, a resource can never be first when you're a non-user!

The good news is that the majority of fishing organizations and industry leaders in America today feel as strongly as we do about fixing Magnuson. On February 24, 2010, be sure to join us on the steps of the U.S. Capitol in a rally to protect our coastal communities. As Bob Flocken of the Southern Kingfish Association (SKA) said recently in a newsletter blast to his industry partners, *"The situation is much more severe than you may realize and unless we unite and put our money where our mouth is, sport fishing is in big trouble."*

Jim Hutchinson, Jr.
RFA Managing Director



KINGFISH CENTRAL

A message from the Southern Kingfish Association

Dear Industry Partner,

Today, your company has the opportunity to unite with other industry members to help stop the insane and unnecessary regulations that the federal government is trying to force down our throats. Anglers across the country are losing their right to fish because of actions that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NFMS) is taking. The situation is much more severe than you may realize and unless we unite and put our money where our mouth is, sport fishing is in big trouble. If we fail to act quickly, we very well might be witnessing the last nail in our industry's coffin.

Wording included during the last reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) in 2007 mandated that all fish stocks must be rebuilt to "maximum

sustainable" levels within arbitrarily determined time frames that have no basis in science. In addition, the law gives fishery management councils only one year to implement regulatory action for any fishery that may be deemed "overfished," and environmentalists are using that term as a scare tactic.

Recently the NMFS and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council told fishermen that they were "required by law" to close all bottom fishing in over 1000 square miles of coastal waters from North Carolina to Florida to protect and rebuild the red snapper populations, even though they readily admit to having insufficient scientific data to make an accurate determination of the health of the stock. They also blame Congress for not allocating sufficient funds to do the necessary research to provide the data needed, yet the MSA forces them to close the fishery, regardless of the socioeconomic consequences.



The NMFS Regional Administrator, Roy Crabtree, told me that the law leaves them no choice, but to close the fishery for seventeen to thirty-five years to achieve the desired stock level required by Magnuson-Stevens. Because red snapper is one of the most popular recreational fish in some of the most populous fishing states in the country, such a closure will destroy a viable fishery and seriously affect the many small businesses that are already struggling under the current economic conditions.

**JOIN THE RALLY ON
THE CAPITOL STEPS
IN WASHINGTON, DC
FEB. 24, 2010
AND BE HEARD!**

These long term closures fall nicely into the well laid plans of Jane Lubchenco, President Obama's appointment as director of NOAA, the ultimate power overseeing NMFS and the fishery councils. Where do her loyalties really lie? From her past history, it is quite obvious that she is speaking out of both sides of her mouth. She has told everyone that she is looking out for the "interests of recreational fishermen," but since the early 1970's, Ms. Lubchenco, her husband, friends and colleagues have received millions of dollars in funding from the Pew Charitable Trust, an organization that has literally hijacked the fishery management system in our country.

Such closures are only the first of many species that PEW has targeted. This group of environmental zealots has a multi-billion dollar war chest courtesy of oil industry profits and they are spending millions to influence government policy that will lead

to the end of all fishing along the entire U.S. coastline.

President Obama has expressed his desires to turn over control of the oceans to a "World Organization". In addition, members of our federal government already have legislation in both the House and Senate proposing that the federal government take control of all natural watersheds away from the states. If this comes to pass, freshwater fishermen will soon be facing these same problems saltwater anglers are already facing. Because of the MSA and concessions made by states along the West Coast, the government has already instituted plans to permanently close an additional 30% of California's coastal waters to all fishing. They are also looking at more closures on the East and West Coasts, in the Gulf of Mexico and Florida Keys as well as a large part of Miami's Biscayne Bay. Jane Lubchenco is a strong proponent of marine reserves that ban all fishing and authored several of her earliest papers promoting their widespread use.

**UNDER CURRENT
LAW, FISHERIES MAY
BE CLOSED FOR
SEVENTEEN TO
THIRTY-FIVE YEARS**

Congress currently allows for flexibility when dealing with clean water and clean air efforts, so as not to completely shut down related industries and eliminate jobs on a wholesale basis, while continuing to make progress with these two very important issues. Why then, when Congress deals with fisheries and fishermen, is it okay to shut down fisheries using inflexible, arbitrary deadlines based on insufficient, unsubstantiated science, with no regard to the socioeconomic impact. In order to stop this insanity the MSA must be amended immediately.

The "Flexibility in Rebuilding American Fisheries Act", has been a priority of the Recreational Fishing Alliance since 2007. It was submitted by Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ) and Rep. John Mica (R-FL) in the House as H.R. 1584 and the long awaited Senate companion bill, S. 1225, was recently introduced by Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY). This legislation addresses the inflexibility of the current language and brings it into line with the Clean Water and Clean Air Bills that have been so successful. The legislation is not only good for America's recreational and commercial fishermen, but will help all the small businesses that are being destroyed by unwarranted and unnecessary regulatory actions. It does not weaken conservation efforts nor encourage a return to wasteful and unsustainable fishing practices.

There are hard-line environment groups that are opposing this legislation purely on ideological grounds and it will not be easy to gain passage with their well financed

opposition. It is important to keep in mind that this legislation has been crafted with lots of input from both recreational and commercial fishermen who truly understand the need for a sustainable future resource, and the rights of anglers to have access to those resources. Our federal fisheries law needs to be fixed now or more unnecessary closures and an economic collapse of our industry are imminent. Unless we put tremendous pressure on our elected officials, nothing will change.

OUR FEDERAL FISHERIES LAW NEEDS TO BE FIXED NOW OR MORE CLOSURES ARE IMMINENT.

The bottom line is that the nation's primary fisheries law is broken and must be amended immediately! If fishermen and industry stand together, Congress will make the necessary changes. But without a united effort we are in big trouble. Recreational fishermen were conservationists long before the environmental fringe got involved with ocean issues pushing its "Sky is Falling" agenda. Anglers have proven to be concerned and responsible stewards of our resources and have never been afraid to do what's necessary to protect fisheries, the environment and the sport we love.

The Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) has filed suit in Federal Court to stop the closures of both the black sea bass and the red snapper fisheries along the East Coast and, along with several other organizations, are planning a massive rally on the steps of the Capitol in Washington D.C. on February 24, 2010. It will be an organized demonstration against the unintended negative impacts of the Magnuson Stevens Conservation and Management Act as currently enacted. You or representatives from your organization need to attend this rally. While your there, ask to be involved in direct meetings with your state legislators on the Hill. With your help, we can protect the rights of all fishermen. The RFA is organizing the lobbying effort and much of the rally. They can be reached at 609-404-1060. Additional information is available on their website at www.joinRFA.org.

I strongly encourage you to get involved. The future of our sport and your business depends on it!

Bob Flocken

Southern Kingfish Association

rkflocken@fishska.com

www.fishska.com

(The RFA thanks Bob Flocken and the Southern Kingfish Association for permission to reprint the preceding letter, and for their continued support of our national efforts to safeguard the rights of saltwater anglers, protect marine, boat and tackle industry jobs, and ensure the long-term sustainability of our nation's saltwater fisheries.)



[Forward email](#)

 **SafeUnsubscribe**®

This email was sent to dave.smith@mssa.net by news@joinrfa.org.
[Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe](#)™ | [Privacy Policy](#).

Email Marketing by



Recreational Fishing Alliance | 176B South New York Rd | Galloway | NJ | 08205