



PRESS RELEASE

Recreational Fishing Alliance

5724 N. Route 9, New Gretna, NJ 08224

P: 888-564-6732 F: 609-294-3812

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Contact: Jim Hutchinson, Jr.

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888 564-6732

CONGRESS COMES TO PANAMA CITY ON AUG. 25TH House Committee to Hold Gulf Field Hearing on Fishing & Jobs

On Saturday, August 25th, the House Natural Resources Committee will hold an oversight field hearing in Panama City, FL entitled, *"Fishing=Jobs: How Strengthening America's Fisheries Strengthens Our Economy."*

Spearheaded through the efforts of Rep. Steve Southerland (R-FL) and Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (R-WA), both of whom will be attending this important House field hearing, the event starts at 10 a.m. on August 25 at the Lecture Hall at the Holley Academic Center at Florida State University, in the heart of Florida's 2nd Congressional in Panama City.

According to Rep. Southerland, the Committee has identified a number of challenges and impediments to fully utilizing the fishery resources of the Gulf of Mexico, and the Saturday field hearing will give Members an opportunity to get a more detailed view of these challenges by hearing from fishermen from within the 2nd Congressional district. The public is invited to attend, though witnesses for the panel are by Committee invite only and are expected to be representative of the overall region.

It's expected that the Committee will be examining whether outdated scientific information is impacting the overall health of the coastal fishery as a whole, and how various governmental restrictions - including catch shares, annual catch limits and accountability measures, as well as the president's National Ocean Policy - will affect the future of Gulf fisheries.

"Florida's recreational fishing community is being well-represented at this oversight hearing in Panama City, it should be a great opportunity for Committee members to hear directly from our Gulf anglers," said RFA executive director Jim Donofrio. "RFA is grateful to Chairman Hastings and Committee member Southerland for bringing Congress to Panama City this summer, a congressional district that has been adversely affected by our federal fisheries law reauthorization in 2006."

Earlier this month, Rep. Southerland announced he was cosponsoring legislation called the Transparent and Science-Based Fishery Management Act of 2012 (HR 6350) which would amend the Magnuson-Stevens Act to address inequities in annual catch limits, catch shares in the Gulf of Mexico, additional rebuilding flexibility, NOAA enforcement, and disaster assistance, among other issues.

"I have heard from anglers from across North and Northwest Florida who have asked me to act as their voice in Washington," Southerland said. "I am pleased to be part of this important effort to make federal fisheries policy more responsive to the needs of our recreational and commercial fishermen."

The House Natural Resources Committee oversight field hearing on *"Fishing=Jobs: How Strengthening America's Fisheries Strengthens Our Economy"* is open to the public, and a live video stream will be broadcast at <http://naturalresources.house.gov/live>. Recreational fishermen and coastal business are encouraged to attend, as the health of the Gulf of Mexico and its fishery resources affect the entire economy of Florida; a U.S. Census Bureau report found that 2.8 million residents and non-resident anglers contributed \$4.3 billion to Florida's economy in fishing-related expenditures in 2006.

The Lecture Hall at the Holley Academic Center is located at Florida State University, 4750 Collegiate Drive in Panama City, FL. Seats for the 10 a.m. Saturday morning hearing on the 25th of August will no doubt fill up fast, so be sure to get there early for a chance to watch as Congress takes special consideration for the needs of Florida's Gulf Coast fishermen.

The Recreational Fishing Alliance is a national, grassroots political action organization representing recreational fishermen and the recreational fishing industry on marine fisheries issues. RFA's Mission is 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. For more information, call 888-JOIN-RFA or visit www.joinrfa.org.