



PRESS RELEASE

Recreational Fishing Alliance

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SEVEN LEADING INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS JOIN RFA BOARD Top Tackle, Tournery & Media Reps Unite To Protect Angler Rights

In its ongoing efforts to build strategic alliances within the recreational fishing and boating industry while strengthening representation of individual members, the Executive Board of Directors for the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) has officially appointed seven, highly qualified new members to begin three-year terms effective immediately.

The seven newest members of the RFA Executive Board include international fishing personality Tred Barta of *The Best and Worst of Tred Barta* (Versus Channel); Nick Cicero, Sales Manager at the Folsom Corporation; Robert Healey, Jr., Assistant to the Chairman for the Viking Group; Jack Holmes, Executive Director of the Southern Kingfish Association (SKA); Tom Putnam, owner of Half Hitch Tackle in Panama City, FL; Norm Schultz, contributing writer for boating publication *Soundings Trade Only*; and Capt. Bob Zales, II, president of the National Association of Charterboat Owners and Operators (NACO).

The newest RFA "Directors at Large" join an RFA Board that also includes Ken Ehlers, Northeast representative for Lamiglas and Wizard Lures; Peter Harper, Business Solutions Manager for GE Capital; RFA co-founder Bob Healey, Chairman and CEO of the Viking Yacht Company; Patrick Healey, Executive Vice-President of Viking Yachts; Phil Keeter, President of the Marine Retailers Association of America (MRAA); Mike Leech, Director of the World Cup Blue Marlin Tournament; Jim Motsko, White Marlin Open; Joey Prochazka, Director - Saltwater Division for Z-Man Fishing; Jim Simons, World Billfish Series; Jerry Straub Sr., Chief Financial Officer of Viking Yachts; William "Jamie" Wilkinson, Senior Director of Event Operations at ESPN Outdoors; and Dick Wood, President of Wood Advertising.

"These are difficult times for our recreational fishing industry, and the folks now assembled at the RFA's national advisory level truly understand today's challenges," said RFA Executive Director, Jim Donofrio. "When we first incorporated the RFA in 1996, our goal was make positive changes in the way that our government manages our nation's saltwater fisheries by combining the voting power of a grassroots national membership with the economic power of the fishing industry. These board members are truly engaged at both levels and can help expand our national message that fishing is a right worth protecting."

As managing partner of the nation's largest saltwater tournament trail, SKA's Holmes has worked very closely with both fishermen and fishing industry during his career. "I travel all over the southeast talking to both tournament anglers and weekend warriors virtually every weekend and I can say that the fishing community is visibly upset with current government controls," Holmes said. "In the 30 years I've been affiliated with the marine and fishing industry I have never seen anything like this. We're letting all we've worked for go down the drain because of a lack of vision and unity."

Holmes said the recession is most certainly hurting business, but it's the regulatory issues that are killing the industry. "When fishermen are denied access to their passion or they need an attorney to fish with them the results are obvious, they will give up their activities, that's not speculation, it's fact and we've seen it first hand and so have boat and motor dealers and especially tackle stores." Holmes said joining the RFA Board of Directors provides a valuable opportunity to help fight for the rights of those individual SKA anglers. "Over the years the Recreational Fishing Alliance has become the voice for these people," he said.

“All conservation groups that deal with salt water are more good than bad, and although many have their strengths and weakness I belong to each one of them,” said Tred Barta. A lifetime member of the RFA, Barta added “the fact remains that the RFA does more, accomplishes more to protect our rights as saltwater anglers than all of them put together.”

As representative of a major international fishing tackle wholesaler, Cicero stressed the importance of getting everyone in the fishing industry engaged in the process. “Allowing the National Marine Fisheries Service to implement checks without proper balances is a dangerous proposition,” Cicero said, adding “If left unattended, our industry would be in perilous jeopardy.”

“What’s most important about the RFA is their willingness to address the inequities threatening our industry, which further undermine the recreational fishing traditions in America,” Cicero said. “Our fishing community is demanding attention, and I believe the RFA gets them the attention from a federal level,” he added.

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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.