



PRESS RELEASE

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RFA & NOAA IDEOLOGIES CLASH AT CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE Lubchenco Takes A Licking, While Donofrio Keeps Ticking Off Bureaucrats

For the second week in a row, Jim Donofrio of the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) and NOAA Administrator Dr. Jane Lubchenco appeared together in a panel discussion concerning national ocean policies. However, while Dr. Lubchenco received a rather warm embrace by last week's hosts at the Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ), she was met with a chillier reception during a much more critical line of questioning by Congressional representatives sitting on a House Natural Resources Committee hearing in Washington DC.

In an online blog appearing at House Speaker John Boehner's website, RFA's executive director was quoted as saying that President Obama's new National Oceans Policy regulations "stifle job growth" and create "too much uncertainty" for America's angling community. "The recreational fishing industry is 'Main Street America' in every sense; it is largely composed of small, family-run, mom and pop businesses," Donofrio said, going on to say that "creating additional levels of bureaucracy" will reduce the overall productivity of his industry, and that a time of high unemployment "it seems counterproductive to advance and fund the NOP when it will stifle job growth in the fishing sectors."

This week's hearing focused primarily on the President's executive order, an action which bypassed legislative protocol and led to starting headlines in the national news media in 2010 about the future of recreational fishing opportunities. The House Resource Committee which for close to a decade has refused to approve the burdensome oceans policy has been convened twice in the past month to review the presidential edict.

Appearing on Wednesday, October 26th at the Longworth House Office Building in Washington were panelists Nancy Sutley and Dr. Lubchenco on behalf of the Obama Administration, Donofrio as representative of the recreational fishing community, Randall Luthi of the National Ocean Industries Association and Michael Conathan of the Center for American Progress.

RFA encourages anglers to sit down and view the testimony, archived in its entirety at the House Resource Committee website at http://resources.edgeboss.net/wmedia/resources/112/2011_10_26_fc.wvx

For an abbreviated look at NOAA's bad day at Congress, use the scroll bar in the media window to fast-forward ahead to a few of the best parts.

1:15 - Committee Chairman Doc Hastings describes lack of response from Obama administration regarding National Ocean Policy bureaucracy.

40:20 - Rep. Rush Holt provides single token letter of angler support for the executive order, that of John McMurray, an advisor for Environmental Defense Fund hand-picked by Lubchenco to represent New York fishermen at the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC).

1:34:10 - Rep. Don Young (R-AK) grills Dr. Lubchenco on her comments that "quite a few fishermen" support the executive order, though she's unable to produce a name except to say the MAFMC ("same one as you put catch shares involved into," replies Young.)

1:42:00 - Rep. Steve Southerland (R-FL) questions the use of new "regulation" under the executive order, though neither Dr. Lubchenco nor Sutley seem willing or capable of appropriately answering the congressman's question about regulations and enforcement.

1:54:40 – In his opening five-minute remarks, Donofrio calls executive order “a complete government takeover of our fisheries,” while criticizing NOAA for not funding scientific efforts which he calls the “administration’s complete disregard of personal liberties and state’s rights.”

2:13:03 – In answering a question from Chairman Hastings about science, Donofrio says NOAA “couldn’t run a kindergarten playground,” charging the fisheries service with perjuring itself in a recent black sea bass lawsuit, saying “they lied to the judge, yet they’re keeping us at the dock based on MRFSS data.”

2:23:30 – Rep. Bill Flores (R-TX) calls the ocean policy “ideological” and asks Donofrio about how his input as a stakeholder is considered by NOAA. “Dr. Lubchenco’s administration has been whacking people off the councils and stacking them with their own people,” Donofrio replied. “So of course she throws it back to the council now and said ‘okay the councils are going to make the decision.’”

2:28:10 – In response to a follow-up question from Rep. Jon Runyan (R-NJ) about the state of the fishing industry, Donofrio said fishermen are “disgusted with federal regulations that are not allowing them to fish on rebuilt stocks and NOAA’s not doing a thing about it, what they want to do is add more layers of bureaucracy that costs more money when they’re not spending the money to keep us fishing.”

Following the hearing, Rep. Runyan applauded the Natural Resources Committee for continuing its oversight responsibilities on the National Ocean Policy. “This executive order has the potential to put into place policies that could negatively impact small businesses throughout the state and specifically the state’s commercial and recreational fishing industry,” Runyan said, adding “we must work to keep New Jersey’s beaches and waterways clean, but we need to do it in a manner that will not impose unnecessary burdens on the small businesses that rely upon these natural resources.”

“We have bad regulations, we have NOAA not working within their own system there to fix anything and now they’re expecting us to buy this additional layer of bureaucracy with additional councils overseeing fishing,” Donofrio told Congress on Wednesday morning, warning “I can’t imagine our fleet fishing anymore, I really can’t.”

“I was very interested in hearing from Mr. Donofrio regarding his organization’s opinion on this policy,” said Congressman Runyan, adding “the commercial and recreational fishing industries play a vital role in New Jersey’s economy, and I want to be sure that the federal government is working to help small businesses grow and not stifling their growth.”

Read RFA’s complete written testimony at the Natural Resources Committee website at:

<http://naturalresources.house.gov/UploadedFiles/DonofrioTestimony10.26.11.pdf>

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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.