



PRESS RELEASE

Recreational Fishing Alliance

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RFA VOLUNTEERS TAKE ON FLORIDA FISHERIES FIGHT New RFA-FL Leadership Ups Ante In Effort To Protect Red Snapper Fishery

March 16, 2011 - Grassroots efforts to safeguard the rights of saltwater anglers in the Southeast have been significantly strengthened this week with official announcement of a new board of volunteer officers for the Florida chapter of the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA-FL).

Newly-elected RFA-FL president Meli Londeree of Mt. Dora, FL said local anglers are experiencing a new set of challenges in terms of accessing coastal fisheries and she believes the newly elected officers for 2011 are energized to face the fight head-on. "We find ourselves in a time of necessary action in Florida, as anglers on the East Coast especially have grown increasingly frustrated by the lack of recreational angler representation in our fisheries management," Londeree said. "Here in Florida we are not going to take it lying down, it's definitely an exciting time."

As new chapter president of RFA-FL Londeree will be working closely with fellow officers Dave Huber (vice president) and Rick Hale (secretary), as well as the rest of the board of directors which includes other recognizable names within the Florida angling community like Dave Heil and Ron Coddington. The board is working with other state chapters and the national organization helping set up regional committees throughout Florida in an active effort to take action at every local level inside the state of Florida, while also helping unite state efforts to meet the RFA mission 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."

"The tides are turning, and we have seen what we as recreational anglers can do when we work together," Londeree said, adding "we have the ear of those who are supposed to represent us, and it's time to keep that ball rolling."

In setting up regional committees, Hale has already been tasked with serving as Northeast Florida chair, and the ultimate goal is to set up other regional committees throughout Florida with representative chairs in the East Central, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, West Central and Keys regions. "As we build membership in each area the chairman will keep all members informed of what is going on, and address any special challenges in each particular region," Londeree added, explaining that RFA-FL is currently in the process of finding regional leaders already active in the state to head these specified committees.

RFA-FL is also addressing other opportunities as well, and with the recent introduction of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission's Red Snapper Tagging Program, the board believes there's an open window to help collect the necessary data to refute the existing bad science that has closed down so much of the Southeast fishery. "We feel this is what we have been screaming for all along, it is so important for everyone to step up and support these efforts," said Heil, who is the lead attorney in the present legal challenge fighting the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) decision to shut down the Southeast red snapper fishery. Heil's comments came at a recent fishing club meeting for the Central Florida Offshore Anglers, where Russel Brodie, Research Administrator for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, spoke about the new data collection program. RFA has stepped up to the challenge working with local fishing clubs to promote this tagging effort.

RFA-FL will also be holding a Pig Roast Fishing Club Social, co-held with the Central Florida Offshore Anglers, and Florida Sport Fishing Association on May 7, 2011 at Bluepoints Marina in Cape Canaveral, FL. The pig has been donated by RFA, and there is no charge for this event. "We intend to use this event to bring everyone together in a fun setting to eat, enjoy, and educate on some of the new opportunities we have coming," Londeree

said. "I am hoping we can get all fishing clubs in the state, and anyone here in Florida who loves to fish to come out and enjoy the day with us."

For more information about the pig roast in Cape Canaveral, and especially regarding the RFA-FL initiatives on behalf of saltwater anglers, email Meli Londeree at meli@joinrfa.org.

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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.