



PRESS RELEASE

Recreational Fishing Alliance

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For Immediate Release
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June 2, 2010
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RFA-SC AND SC LEGISLATORS PREPARE FOR OIL SPILL'S EFFECTS Sen. Campsen Lauded For Legislation to Develop Spill Contingency Plan

(6/2/2010) *Columbia, SC* - Two weeks ago, South Carolina State Senator Chip Campsen was helping a lifelong friend catch a 400-pound blue marlin off the coast of Charleston, SC. By last Wednesday, Senator Campsen was championing legislation on the South Carolina Senate floor that formally requests on behalf of the SC General Assembly that the state's Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) and the Governor's office develop a contingency plan for the Gulf oil disaster's effects on South Carolina's coastal and marine resources.

RFA-SC members immediately contacted legislators to express support of this legislation, and the Senate legislation had received such broad support from other Senators that it was unanimously adopted and sent to the SC House of Representatives. The Senators who placed their names on the bill as co-sponsors are Campbell, Elliott, Rankin, Land, Setzler, Cromer, McGill, Rose, Cleary, Leventis, Grooms, Davis and L. Martin. RFA-SC is very thankful to all these leaders for their ardent support of this legislation.

RFA-SC members next brought the legislation to the attention of several SC House Members as well as various South Carolina based conservation groups including the Coastal Conservation League. By the end of the day, the SC House had introduced the same legislation as their own version, a House bill, in order to give even greater emphasis to the General Assembly's request of SC DNR, DHEC and the Governor. Thanks to Representative Chip Limehouse's initiative as well as other Representatives such as Representatives Jeff Duncan, Shannon Erickson, Anne Hutto, Mike Pitts, Tim Scott and others, the entire roll of the SC House was added as co-sponsorship of the bill. Like the Senate the day before, the SC House adopted their version of the legislation unanimously.

"How can anyone disagree with this legislation and the issue at hand?" asked RFA-SC member Scott Cothran of Greenville, SC. "Everyone already seems to be on the same page with us on this as far as I have heard, but as much more attention on this issue is needed. The seriousness of this oil spill just keeps getting downplayed somehow," he added. Cothran knows personally of what has been lost by Gulf recreational fishermen already having made a week-long trip to Venice, LA this winter with a group of fellow South Carolinians to fish in the area that's been most severely damaged by the oil spill.

RFA-SC Vice Chairman Captain Mark Brown was not surprised by the SC General Assembly's action. "This is not the first time my friend Senator Campsen has stood up as a fellow sportsman and championed legislation we needed," Capt. Brown said. "He understands that recreational fishing deserves much more attention than it's been receiving, and he is a champion for our natural resources constantly up there at the statehouse- a true sportsman," Brown said of Sen. Campsen.

RFA-SC was first on the scene with this posting the ROFFS analysis ocean shots of the spill's progress in the Gulf on local internet fishing forums and being interviewed by TV news crews on the issue several weeks ago. RFA-SC has been informing recreational fishermen in South Carolina about the likely impacts of the continued release of oil into the Gulf.

The Gulf Stream travels from the southern tip of Florida up the southeast coast, and it is essential to marine and coastal life that South Carolina recreational fishermen enjoy. When the Gulf Loop Current carries the oil and some toxic dispersant chemicals used for oil cleanup to the tip of Florida, these toxins will inevitably travel up the coast in the Gulf Stream. Aside from these direct impacts to the resources, several year classes of sport fish will be impacted by the environmental damage being done currently in the Gulf of Mexico.

It has been widely documented that tar balls will have a tremendous impact on reef fish, and the toxins in the Loop and Gulf Stream Currents will be devastating to larval, juvenile and spawning stages of sport fish and their food supply. A further potential is that of hurricane season's looming threat. Large waves and high winds, among other things, further amplify the harmful effects of the leaked oil and other toxins.

Scientists are still trying to get their arms around the effects of the oil spill. Don Hammond of Cooperative Science Services, LLC has been out in the community urging anglers to tag as many dolphinfish as possible in the Gulf Stream waters so that he and others might determine how fish respond to the toxic water heading South Carolina's way. RFA-SC urges all RFA members to take part in this important initiative so that we might understand and hopefully mitigate some of the true effects of the Gulf disaster. More on Hammond's tagging study can be found at <http://dolphintagging.com/>.

RFA-SC will continue to be a first responder to issues affecting South Carolina's saltwater recreational anglers, related businesses and long-term sustainability of coastal and marine resources. RFA Executive Director Jim Donofrio noted, "RFA-SC knows how much of South Carolina's recreational values depend upon the health of its marine and coastal resources, and having a plan in place for the effects of the oil spill off our coast is a logical first step to mitigate any damage they possibly can."

RFA-SC has also learned of efforts by local scientists in Charleston to set up a study to track the oil's progress along the South Atlantic coast. RFA-SC has been asked to contact RFA members to inform them of where sighted in marine and coastal areas can be reported. RFA members should stand by for more information on this important initiative to track the oil along its progress up the United States' east coast.

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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.