



# PRESS RELEASE

## Recreational Fishing Alliance

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### **EDF TO HOST A CONGRESSIONAL 'CATCH SHARE' PARTY IN DC RFA Says Magnuson Reform Is The Best Answer To National Anti-Fishing Agenda**

"The way to put an end to the continued fishing closures and help stem the tide of the Catch Shares movement is by reforming our federal fisheries law," says Jim Donofrio, executive director of the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA). "If we don't fix the Magnuson Stevens Act in this Congress, things will only get worse for our recreational fishing industry and our coastal anglers."

While RFA is spearheading legislative efforts to reform the federal fisheries law to help save coastal fishing communities, a handful of federal legislators are scrambling to endorse a plan designed to cap participation and trade away access rights to the nation's public resources. Congressmen Sam Farr (D-California) and Jay Inslee (D-Washington) have invited Members of Congress to attend a Wednesday briefing on "Reviving Coastal Economies through Healthy, Vibrant Fisheries and Oceans." According to Donofrio, the lobbying effort in favor of Catch Shares is yet another dog and pony show scripted by Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) activists and run through DC legislators who are friendly to their cause.

"California anglers need to take a legal expert along for the ride anytime they want to wet a line based on the fact that the allowable fishing areas have been restricted to zones the size of postage stamps while coastal fisheries are shut off, so it's really hard for us to understand how Rep. Farr believes he holds the key to reviving our struggling coastal economies," Donofrio said. "Our West Coast recreational fishing industry has been devastated by these EDF-style initiatives, I can't see where too many East Coast or Gulf of Mexico legislators need a briefing instructing them how to destroy an industry."

In a story this week in the Gloucester Daily Times, writer Richard Gaines says a new pro-catch share petition is now being circulated anonymously in the intensifying congressional debate over the Obama administration's plan to commodify wild fish stocks, and has been allegedly penned by an industry executive with the region's largest "sector" or fishing cooperative. According to a document obtained on February 25 by the Times, Maggie Raymond reportedly admitted to drafting the petition at the request of Mike Leary, a Sustainable Harvest member and an appointee to the New England Fishery Management Council, which wrote the rules for the transformation of the \$60 million groundfishery into a commodities market.

"Catch Shares are the preservationist's answer our fisheries problem in America, it's the way the EDF wants to address area closures and overly restrictive regulations," Donofrio said. "The reason why our fishing communities are being denied access to rebuilding fish populations is because EDF and their allies actually wrote the language contained with Magnuson which creates the statutory problems causing our fisheries closures."

"Essentially, EDF and their friends over at the Pew Environment Group lit the original fire, and they're offering us a gas can called Catch Shares to help douse the flames," Donofrio said. "Regrettably, it's not the first inferno set forth by the actions of Mr. Farr."

Last year, the Obama administration salvaged Rep. Farr's failed Oceans 21 legislation which called for a national framework for marine spatial planning initiatives, as the president signed an executive order establishing a new Ocean Policy Task Force. "At a time when science knows the oceans are dying and several politicians have known it, there's never been a crisis to drive policy, until now," Farr said of the President's July 19th executive order, which essentially circumvented the legislative process.

Just five months prior to the presidential order, RFA and allied groups converged on Capitol Hill with a unified message to reform the federal fisheries law. The 5,000 member rally helped put the fishing community's message into national headlines, and has since spawned many smaller rallies throughout the country. Last Friday in St. Petersburg, FL, several hundred fishermen turned out for a mini-rally in front of the offices of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) headquarters to protest the incorporation of Catch Shares and the recently enacted grouper ban in the Gulf of Mexico.

"We often focus on the connection between the environmental left and the U.S. Commerce Department, including NMFS and other consortiums, but the real culprit here in Florida is the same as with much of the rest of the U.S. and that's the problems with the Magnuson Stevens Act," said Gary Poyssick, communications director for the RFA-FL chapter.

"Our entire fishing community knows about the insidious relationships between all these 'green' groups and the federal regulators, but the reality is that all the problems, from Catch Shares to Sector Separation to the ban now crippling our state's critical sport fishery, can be solved by fixing that broken law," Poyssick added.

In 2006, the RFA lobbied intensely to incorporate limited flexibility into the federal fisheries law during the reauthorization of Magnuson Stevens. Due to heavy influence from the environmental business community, unduly restrictive measures and ambiguous statutory definitions were incorporated into the law, which RFA correctly forecasted as leading to wide-scale fisheries closures.

"Florida anglers are facing the same problems as our guys in the Northeast, and it's all related to a poorly written federal fisheries law," Donofrio said. "When Magnuson was reauthorized by unanimous consent in the Senate back in 2006, it was not well thought out in terms of the future effects it would have on our fishing communities. The problems are happening everywhere, and the only way to fix the problems is by fixing the law."

"Our Southeast fishing community is finally united in recognizing that the over-arching problems with red snapper and grouper are the same as those impacting our summer flounder and black sea bass fisheries, and fixing Magnuson is the only way of cutting off the Catch Share lobbying army at the pass," Donofrio added.

According to reports, Wednesday's Catch Share briefing in Congress will also feature Glen Libby of Maine from the Midcoast Fishermen's Association, in addition to "Buddy" Guindon of Texas from the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance. NMFS Administrator Eric Schwaab will also be joined by former NMFS Administrator William Hogarth on the panel.

In addition to working with Congress on a more comprehensive Magnuson reform bill, RFA is currently contacting U.S. Senators in support of the Jones Amendment which was recently passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on a recorded vote of 259-159. If passed by the Senate and signed into law, the Amendment would prevent funds from being expended by NMFS to enact new limited access fishing programs.

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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](http://www.joinrfa.org).*