



PRESS RELEASE

Recreational Fishing Alliance

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12 MILLION U.S. SALTWATER ANGLERS IGNORED NEW FEDERAL ATTEMPTS TO CIRCUMVENT LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

A recently published federal taskforce report is causing a great deal of concern for America's recreational fishing community. For longtime members of the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) however, the claim that saltwater anglers have been kept out of the review process is nothing especially new. According to the RFA however, it's good to see the national sportfishing industry starting to report it as passionately as coastal stakeholders have for the past few years.

The report from the president's newly appointed Interagency Oceans Policy Task Force outlines a federal initiative that could conceivably pave the way for more restrictive governmental actions in further denying access to recreational anglers, similar to what's already been accomplished in California with the marine life protection act (MLPA). RFA has been actively engaged in the MLPA battle on the west coast for over seven years, as the California RFA chapter especially has fought tirelessly against compromises made between various industry allies and hardline environmentalist. The non-scientific based Pacific Coast closures now seem poised to extend eastward as the new Interagency Oceans Policy Task Force has introduced a comprehensive federal policy for all U.S. coastal, ocean and Great Lakes waters. Under the guise of protection, the current second phase of the Task Force direction is set to develop zoning initiatives which could potentially close vast areas of fishable waters, permanently.

"In reviewing the Report, there are strategies, principles, objectives and other authorizing language that stands to have profound impacts on the recreational fishing community," said RFA Executive Director Jim Donofrio in official comments to Nancy Sutley, Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). In writing on behalf of RFA members nationwide, Donofrio said "RFA is concerned about the relatively rapid speed at which CEQ is advancing with this initiative and the apparent lack of opportunity the average recreational angler will have when the final Policy and subsequent bureaucracy is put in place

In a recent meeting facilitated by RFA to introduce Mid-Atlantic and Northeast coastal stakeholders to the new Director of External Affairs, Andrew Winer, it was revealed that several national trade and conservation groups had actually participated in the Interagency Oceans Policy Task Force discussions. As reported by [ESPN Outdoors](#), RFA hopes that any future discussions involving recreational anglers that will ultimately impact coastal stakeholders will actually include those coastal constituents. "We're hoping that after listening to the real stakeholders who live and breathe within these vibrant coastal communities every single day, that perhaps Mr. Winer can help us shake a little sense into these Beltway insiders who think they understand recreational fishermen," said Jim Hutchinson, Managing Director of the RFA.

While the RFA commends CEQ for bringing wide national attention to the management of our nation's marine resources, as a national saltwater political action organization representing marine businesses and users alike, RFA is opposed to any taskforce recommendations that might be enacted through the Executive branch as opposed to through legislative efforts. "Considering the broad implications and hundreds of stakeholders groups that will be affected, the most appropriate course of action would be through the Legislative branch," Donofrio said in the letter to CEQ, adding "Stakeholders would have a greater opportunity to discuss the virtues and flaws of the legislation in a more deliberate, transparent process."

On June 18, Donofrio testified before the House Natural Resources Committee, Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife in a hearing convened to review H.R. 21, a bill which would establish a new national policy for our oceans. The RFA was the only recreational fishing organization invited to testify before the Congressional Committee. "RFA maintains that Magnuson must remain the nation's primary fisheries law and that any national ocean policy spawned from H.R. 21 provide guidance and recommendations to Magnuson, not supersede it," Donofrio said during the afternoon session back in June.

Several hardline environmental groups have been pressuring Congress and the Obama administration to implement new overriding marine laws, however, several key federal legislators have helped stymie the repressive ocean policy legislation. "This bill's not going to go anywhere," said Rep. Don Young (R-AK). "You may try to work it through the House, you may have the Speaker help you out, but I'll stop it dead in the Senate, because you're not going to mess with my waters in Alaska, you're not going to mess with my fishermen as you've done in the past," Young added.

Donofrio said the RFA is unnerved by glaring similarities of the new report and H.R. 21, the Ocean Conservation, Education, and National Strategy for the 21st Century Act. "This appears to be an attempt by the Executive branch to circumvent the established legislative process and enact policy that failed as legislation 5 years in a row," Donofrio said, adding "RFA believes enacting laws through Executive order and proclamation sets a dangerous precedence."

The RFA's six-page letter to White House Council on Environmental Quality is available online for review at www.joinrfa.org/press/CEQComments_101909.pdf.

To view the 10/18/09 congressional hearing on the H.R. 21 in its entirety, go to http://resources.edgeboss.net/wmedia/resources/2009_06_18_oceans.wvx
(Jim Donofrio's testimony begins at 1:06:06)

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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.
The RFA 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.*