
Fishermen's Jobs Don't Count?

Saving bankers' jobs costs billions of tax dollars, saving the jobs of fishermen will be at no cost to the taxpayers, the fish or the environment.

NEW SMYRNA BEACH, Fla., Feb. 16 /PRNewswire/ -- Thousands of commercial, recreational and party charter boat fishermen and people in businesses depending on them from Alaska, both coasts and the Gulf of Mexico have united under the banner of the Preserve Fishing Coalition to support federal legislation introduced by New Jersey Congressman Frank Pallone and New York Senator Charles Schumer and 26 co-sponsors. The Flexibility in Rebuilding American Fisheries Act of 2009 (HR 1584 and S 1255) will relieve fishermen from the onerous and totally unnecessary rigidity in stock rebuilding timeframes that have been added to the Magnuson Act by the successful lobbying of activist environmental organizations funded by multi-billion dollar foundations with strong corporate connections.

The Coalition, an ad hoc group started by 14 fishing organization leaders, is coordinating a fishermen's rally on the steps of the Capital starting at noon on February 24th and is collecting signatures on a web-based letter thanking the Act's sponsors for taking the critical first step in returning independent fishermen to their rightful place in the fisheries management process.

The letter will be presented to the legislators at the rally.

From the letter, "the intent of the Magnuson Act as originally passed specifically included fishermen in the management process to balance the lack of precision in fisheries science with their on-the-water experience. That imprecision is still and will always be with us, and independent fishermen's participation in the management process should be as well."

The letter also focuses on the ongoing marginalization of fishermen in the media and the public eye through the foundations' extraordinary ability to promote the campaigns of the anti-fishing activist organizations and "a handful of recreational and commercial fishing organizations" that they have subsidized.

According to Nils Stolpe, one of the organizers of the Preserve Fishing Coalition, "the rigidity in regulations is inflicting untold economic damage and human suffering on fishing families and fishing-dependent businesses up and down our coasts. Why? To have a stock rebuilt to some arbitrary level a year or two earlier. No difference to the fish, a huge difference to the fishermen, and another trumped up campaign to swell the

treasuries of the so-called marine conservationist organizations."

Jim Donofrio, Executive Director of the Recreational Fishing Alliance and another organizer, questions the fact that, in this period of great economic strain, "the Obama Administration is on a path that will put additional thousands of people out of work when a minor relaxation of the rigid rebuilding requirements, making virtually no difference in fish conservation, would save most of those jobs. We're bringing that message to Congress for millions of fishermen and tens of thousands of fishing and fishing dependent businesses."

Details about the rally are available at <http://www.unitedwefish.com/> and the letter/petition at <http://fs16.formsite.com/FixMagnusonNow/form793561462/>.

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