

Fix Magnuson Now rally organizers announce plans for going forward

An ad hoc coalition of recreational, commercial and party/charter fishing organizations brought an estimated 5,000 fishermen to Washington to demonstrate to Congress how important it is to change the Magnuson Act, the federal law that underlies our national fisheries management program. In a loud and unified voice they made it clear that the unnecessary rigidity that has been added to the Act by foundation-funded environmental activists are threatening fishing-related businesses, and the communities they support, in every coastal state.

That coalition has now announced the formation of a national organization, Keep Fishermen Fishing and Working, with the goals of keeping recreational fishermen fishing, keeping commercial and party/charter fishermen working, keeping businesses that are dependent on fishing in business, and doing this sustainably and with minimal impacts on the ocean environment.

Since the Magnuson Act was signed into law in 1976, the role of independent fishermen in the federal fisheries management process has been steadily eroded by Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations. Among other tactics, they have used their multi-million dollar budgets provided by a handful of “charitable” foundations with strong corporate ties to subsidize “fishermen” and fishing organizations to tout their brand of fisheries management. For the first time, independent fishermen will have a grass-roots mechanism to counter the effects of these “Astroturf” organizations and individuals.

Concurrent with the Washington rally, the organizers had a web-based petition that garnered almost 5,000 signatures including the leaders of over 40 national, regional and state fishing organizations. Representing all sectors of the recreational, commercial and party/charter fisheries, the people who attended the rally and those who signed the petition have formed the nucleus of an organization that will have unprecedented influence in Washington.

As one of the first orders of business, Keep Fishermen Fishing has targeted Florida, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, New Jersey, Georgia and Texas for mini-rallies, demonstrating to the elected leaders how the Magnuson Act has been transformed into a tool that is being used against the fishermen in those states.

More information and membership forms are available at the Keep Fishermen Fishing website (<http://keepfishermenfishing.org/>).

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