

SOUTH CAROLINA SENDS FISHING MESSAGE TO CONGRESS

RFA-SC Praises State Legislators For Helping Take Up Access Fight

The South Carolina Legislature is sending the U.S. Congress a message from the entire state about what saltwater recreational fishermen and countless businesses desperately need; a resolution urging Congress to adopt S. 632, the Flexibility in Rebuilding American Fisheries Act, has been introduced in the South Carolina statehouse by Representative Kevin Ryan of Georgetown, SC.

The Recreational Fishing Alliance's South Carolina chapter (RFA-SC) is extremely grateful to Representative Ryan as well as the bill's cosponsors, including Representatives Brantley, Hardwick, Hearn, Barfield, Anderson, McCoy, Patrick, Gilliard, Erickson, Hodges, Stavrinakis, Viers, R.L. Brown, Clemmons, Edge, Herbkersman, Limehouse and Sottile. These leaders understand the importance of recreational fishing to the state of South Carolina - they also understand that Congress must reform broken fisheries laws, and the Department of Commerce must prioritize funding for more frequent and accurate stock fishery stock assessments.

The resolution states how fishery assessments are currently highly inaccurate, and that since the last reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act regional management councils have been required to rebuild fisheries within 10 years. RFA-SC board member Captain Mark Brown of Shem Creek said, "I guess people are finally waking up and realizing this isn't just about red snapper or snowy grouper when they are now having to throw back hundreds of large black sea bass due to the closure this year."

Captain Keith Logan of Longs, also an RFA-SC board member, has been working with chambers of commerce and the Grand Strand Fishing Alliance to engage more than just fishermen on this issue. He also notes that more are getting involved at this point because they understand the community and state lose money when boats are sitting at the docks and no tackle, clothing, food, fuel, lodging, insurance, etc. are being purchased.

Representative Ryan's resolution points out the direct annual economic value of saltwater recreational fishing in South Carolina which totals more than \$1.5 billion; the resolution also recognizes South Carolina is being ranked fifth among all states for tourist expenditures on recreational fishing. Because of these and other facts, the resolution urges Congress to adopt S. 632, the Flexibility in Rebuilding American Fisheries Act, without delay, and the resolution also urges Commerce to conduct better and more frequent fishery stock assessments.

The resolution can be found at http://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess119_2011-

2012/bills/4206.htm

Similar resolutions have been passed by several coastal counties and cities thanks to efforts by local and regional chambers of commerce, leaders within the community like Captain Keith Logan, RFA-SC members and many others. RFA-SC is very grateful to its allies who support the RFA and its mission.

Introduced by Sen. Charles Schumer of New York and supported by a bipartisan group of coastal co-sponsors including Sen. Kay Hagan and Sen. Richard Burr of North Carolina, Sen. Scott Brown of Massachusetts, and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, the Flexibility in Rebuilding American Fisheries Act of 2011 (S. 632) calls for amending the federal fisheries law in order to provide management councils with greater discretion in setting targets and deadlines for rebuilding fish stocks.

Ever since the Magnuson Stevens Act was reauthorized in 2006/2007 with stricter legal deadlines and requirements, RFA has pushing federally for reform legislation to give councils greater flexibility to allow anglers continued access to rebuilding fisheries. In recent months, important recreational fisheries like red snapper, amberjack, summer flounder, scup and black sea bass have all been highly restricted because of the new legal requirements included in the last reauthorization of the federal fisheries law.

"RFA continues to promote legislation which provides some common sense management flexibility in protecting the access rights of anglers," said RFA Executive Director Jim Donofrio. "At every state level in coastal America, we need more grassroots support from our anglers to get some federal action to this local access problem, and I'm proud of our RFA-SC chapter for what they've been able to do on the ground there."

About Recreational Fishing Alliance

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.