



# PRESS RELEASE

## Recreational Fishing Alliance

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For Immediate Release  
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### **'EVIL DEFENSE' LOBBY FIRM BUILDS FISHY CLIENT LIST RFA Says Legislators Aren't Fooled By Mock Fishing Masqueraders**

Former New York Republican Congressman James Walsh is now lobbying his congressional friends in DC on behalf of catch shares and the privatization of our coastal fish stocks. According to the Legal Times, Walsh is among members of the K&L Gates government affairs practice who've notified Congress that they are now advocating for the South Atlantic Fishermen's Association, having received \$10,000 from the group between April 1 and June 30 for its advocacy efforts.

The fishermen's group and their allies including the Fishermen's Marketing Association, Fishing Vessel Owners' Association and Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance, wrote in a letter to Congress in March that catch share programs "have a proven track record of success in U.S. fisheries, maintaining or restoring fish stocks and providing high-wage jobs for fishermen and processing workers."

Walsh who formerly served on the House Appropriations Committee is among a group of K&L Gates lobbyists who also represent the Environmental Defense Action Fund on fishery management programs. The firm received \$170,000 from the organization during the first half of 2011 for its lobbying work, and the team of lobbyists now representing both Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) and the South Atlantic Fishermen's Association includes fellow K&L Gates staffers including James Sartucci, Darrell Conner, W. Dennis Stephens, Yvette Wissmann and Dennis Potter.

According to the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA), the preservationist groups and their well-heeled corporate lobbyists appear to have strengthened forces on the front line and are readying their attack at the heart of the coastal fishing communities. "EDF has thrown a lot of money around the recreational and commercial fishing industry and it's become quite obvious to many U.S. legislators that EDF mercenaries are doing much of the campaign work," said Jim Donofrio, RFA's executive director. "This is not a grassroots effort, it's what folks in DC call [astroturfing](#) and is taken right out of the Pew Charitable Trusts playbook. Those who've spoken out against the 'Evil Defense' agenda can expect to get dirty soon as these well-paid activists prepare to sling some mud around."

In the most recent available tax returns, the South Atlantic Fishermen's Association received \$39,000 in grant assistance from EDF in 2009, while the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance netted more than \$100,000 in EDF funding. A Florida based commercial fishing organization said the South Atlantic Fishermen's Association has received well over \$200,000 from EDF for lobbying purposes and has run several ads in DC publications like Politico in support of catch share programs.

According to [Gloucester Times](#) reporter Richard Gaines, a key U.S. House committee's recent decision to cut \$32 million from the Obama administration's funding request to further expand NOAA's fishery catch-share system has renewed a fierce ideological and political battle in DC begun last February when Rep. Walter Jones (R-NC) successfully led a 251-151 victory in opposition to catch shares within the Continuing Budget Resolution. The so-called Jones Amendment would've barred introduction of new catch share programs for this fiscal year, but was ultimately watered down in the Senate during the contentious budget debate last winter.

According to his staff, Rep. Jones is preparing to submit for the second time his amendment to stop catch shares in their tracks. "The congressman will resubmit the amendment from the floor which will allow no funding for the development or approval of new catch share programs," Joshua Bowlen, Jones's legislative director told the Times.

Donofrio has called that good news for anglers. "Catch shares placed solely on the commercial sector will forever memorialize allocation and will not allow our angling community to argue for increased quota, while catch shares in the recreational sector in the form of fish tags or state issued individual fishing quota (IFQ) will simply cap participation to a few privileged anglers and entities," he said.

RFA said the recreational fishing community is being divided into the 'haves' and 'have nots' with the future of individual anglers hanging in the balance. "We're seeing private anglers asking to be treated differently from the for-hire folks, while at the same time a handful of charter boat captains are attempting to corner the market for themselves," said RFA's managing director Jim Hutchinson, Jr. "At a recent meeting in New York, one party boat captain asked that the recreational community get subdivided into commercial and private anglers, which drew a lot of angry looks in the room where I was sitting."

"We've seen this type of division in New England with cod and haddock already and how it's impacted both participation and access, this is not a door we should be opening in other regions," Hutchinson said.

RFA points to the South Atlantic and Gulf regions as examples of where sector separation and division amongst the recreational ranks could spell real trouble in terms of future access to the resource. A recently formed group called the Charter Fisherman's Association (CFA) which has allied itself with the EDF-funded Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders' Alliance, describes itself as consisting of "like-minded charter operators and captains who are trying to advance new ideas in the charter-for-hire industry; a separate fisheries management plan for the charter-for-hire fleet is one of CFA's more immediate goals."

A recent letter to members of Congress signed by CFA's executive director Michael Miglini appeals to legislators to defeat any riders blocking the approval of limited access privilege programs in the Gulf. Claiming to be a recreational charter captain, Miglini already owns shares of grouper, snapper and tilefish in the Gulf of Mexico as an individual captain, and also is the owner of at least two other business enterprises (South Atlantic Fishing, Inc. and Great Sage, Inc.) which possess IFQ permits. Miglini, a former technology stock investor and construction company owner according to the Amarillo Globe-News, is also associated with other corporations called South Atlantic Grouper, Inc. and Decent Seas, Inc.

"What we're seeing in the Gulf region is that one captain may own multiple permits for harvesting allotted shares of fish, and the captain will head out with several tin boats stacked on top of one another on the deck of their dive boat, each with its own allotted IFQ permit in addition to the captain's primary boat," said Donofrio. "If this wasn't so deviously treacherous, it would almost be laughable." RFA recently [signed on to a group letter](#) with more than two dozen like-minded recreational and commercial fishing organizations calling a violation of basic human rights "by creating a privileged class of fishermen in a privatized industry."

RFA said the entire catch share initiative now being lobbied along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts by preservationists at EDF is based on the perception that fisheries management policies are failing. "NOAA Fisheries latest report shows that 84% of U.S. fish stocks are not subject to overfishing, noting that the majority of our nation's fisheries are at sustainable levels," said Donofrio. "We need to fix our federal law to allow anglers access to these rebuilding fisheries, we don't need to privatize our resource in the name of a few well-connected investors."

As reported previously in the Gloucester-Times, EDF vice president David Festa has spent the last two years urging private investors to help transform the nation's fisheries from a commonly held resource into negotiable commodities. "It's not telecom money, but it's real money," Festa advised a small but influential private audience of mutual and hedge fund managers and environmental non-government organization officials at an April 28 panel on *Innovative Funding for Sustainable Fisheries and Oceans*. Festa's projection was for a 400% return on the investment based on his own experiences with the imposition of catch shares in other fisheries.

"Thankfully the Gloucester and New Bedford press have kept the heat on this anti-fishing agenda," Donofrio said, adding "it's regrettable that very few members of our own recreational fishing news media have recognized this manipulative attack on America's right to fish."

[Click here](#) to see what one environmental activist has to say about Environmental Defense Fund.

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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).*