



PRESS RELEASE

Recreational Fishing Alliance

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'CATCH SHARE' AMENDMENTS EXPECTED IN HOUSE BILL RFA Says Southerland Version Offers Best Protection for Anglers

This week, Rep. Steve Southerland (R-FL) will introduce an amendment on the floor of the House to HR5326, a bill that allows for funding appropriations for the Departments of Commerce and Justice, Science, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2013.

Rep. Southerland's amendment will ensure that none of the funds appropriated to NOAA Fisheries and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) are used to "develop, approve, or implement limited access privilege programs" for regional fisheries in the South Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, New England or Gulf of Mexico regions, unless those programs were already in place.

The Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) fully supports Rep. Southerland's amendment to the NOAA Fisheries budget, and believes it is presently the only way to stop the federal fisheries service from steamrolling their catch share policy through the regional fisheries council process.

"Mr. Southerland's amendment is concise, simple to understand and clearly worded to help protect our anglers and keep catch shares from being implemented across the board to the exclusion of the recreational fishermen themselves," said RFA executive director Jim Donofrio. "Mr. Southerland and his staff have been fully engaged in this process to protect our coastal communities, they've been attending regional council meetings back at home and they clearly understand what's at risk here."

Donofrio said Rep. Walter Jones (R-NC) also plans to introduce an amendment to the appropriations bill this week, but explained that the Jones amendment does not adequately protect those fishing communities who have not yet been saddled with the restrictive 'cap and trade' policy of fisheries management, particularly in the recreational sector. "A one word difference exists between the two amendments, the word 'implement' which is key to protecting our coastal fishing heritage and safeguarding the rights of our saltwater anglers," said Donofrio.

"We feel that Mr. Southerland's amendment goes further in protecting our fishermen from being forced to deal with the future implementation of anti-fishing measures like catch shares," Donofrio said.

Capt. Bob Zales, II, a member of RFA's board of directors and president of the National Association of Charterboat Operators (NACO) as well as the Panama City Boatmen's Association (PCBA) said he is also hoping to see the Southerland amendment approved on the House floor this week. "NACO and PCBA are supporting Rep Southerland's bill," Capt. Zales said, adding "the language in his bill is stronger and leaves little wiggle room for the magicians at NOAA/NMFS."

Zales' 'magician' reference stems from a recent Associated Press story on NOAA's eight-page job solicitation to hire a motivational speaker at a cost of approximately \$3,500 for an upcoming NOAA conference. The federal agency said presentations should include "physical energizers, magic tricks, puzzles, brain teasers, word games, humor and teambuilding exercises," while asking for the performer to create "a unique model of translating magic and principals of the psychology of magic, magic tools, techniques and experiences into a method of teaching leadership."

RFA has frequently criticized NOAA Fisheries as a manifestation and reflection of the Obama Administration's ongoing policy of crucifying small business, and believes it's time to stop funding programs which will ultimately make fishermen disappear and destroy coastal businesses.

"There are a handful of catch share fans who would like to see our fish stocks privatized so that fishing participation is capped and ownership of the resource is offered in trade amongst a few well-connected groups and individuals, but it's all just sleight of hand by environmental business leaders," Donofrio said.

"NOAA Fisheries has been developing and approving catch share schemes with support from Environmental Defense Fund for the past 3-1/2 years, and they do not want an amendment to move forward which stops the funding for the final implementation of catch shares," he added.

"That's why our thanks and our support goes to Rep. Southerland for helping spearhead this effort to stop this privatization scheme from being implemented," Donofrio said.

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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.