PRESS RELEASE

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RFA Calls for Cooling Tower Upgrades for Coastal Power Plants

Trenton, NJ – The Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) is requesting that all coastal legislatures pass resolutions in both their Senate and Assembly to pursue monies available through the federal stimulus package to put towards upgrades to the power generating stations that operate along those states' coastal waters. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 contains $20 billion to be allocated specifically for the benefit of improving generating stations to make them more 'ecologically friendly,' which the RFA believes could be a boon to aquatic resources.

"Here in New Jersey, we know the Oyster Creek plant draws in and discharges 1.2 billion gallons of water a day, while the considerably larger Salem plant with its three reactors uses 3.05 billion gallons a day," stated John DePersenaire, a research scientist with the RFA. "As this water is drawn in and discharged, massive amounts of marine life are killed," he added.

DePersenaire explained that the Oyster Creek and Salem generating stations, like similar power plants in Brookhaven, NY and Indian River, DE utilize open-cycle cooling systems that draw water from inland and estuarine waters. In the process, millions of fish are killed annually as they become entrained on intake screens, dying from thermal shock or poisoned by chlorine. "Up to one-third of the bay anchovies from the inland bays around Indian River are killed before they're one-year-old," DePersenaire said, citing a report produced by the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC). He added that the outdated technology leads to the random destruction of vast numbers of local gamefish including juvenile winter flounder, striped bass and weakfish, in addition to important forage fish like menhaden and bay anchovy, species vital to the health of the local ecosystems.

"According to a report prepared for the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, 845 million fish per year are killed in the open loop system at the Salem plant," DePersenaire said. "The report goes on to estimate that the impact of the Salem plant on weakfish, once the most important recreational fishery in the Delaware bay, potentially equates to an overall reduction of 7% of the coast wide population or 1.2 million pounds per year stock," he added.

Closed-cycle cooling systems discharge heat through evaporation in cooling towers and recycle water within the power plant. According to the RFA, the installation of cooling towers would be the most effective way to reduce environmental and marine life impacts. This technology reduces the amount of water needed to cool a nuclear plant by upwards of 95% and has become the industry standard since the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972. The operators of open-cycle generating plans have long argued that expense to upgrade to a closed-cycle system is too great. "With $20 billion available in the stimulus package, there really shouldn't be an excuse any longer," DePersenaire said.

Weakfish and winter flounder, two hugely important recreational fisheries, have both experienced deep declines in total biomass, despite continued cutbacks to the annual recreational harvest allowed by federal fisheries managers. While fishermen are actually catching fewer weakfish and winter flounder each year, the annual stock assessments show the stocks failing to respond in terms of rebuilding. The RFA said it's unlikely that any additional quota cuts will be effective in rebuilding total biomass, as many scientists and fisheries managers blame continuing declines on non-fishing sources.

"There is a mysterious correlation in the decline of certain fisheries and the operation of these power plants," explained Jim Donofrio Executive Director of the RFA. "The volume of water and marine life taken

in through their open-cycle cooling has to be questioned as a contributing factor particularly with winter flounder and weakfish which are unknown to spawn in areas near these plants."

Donofrio added that the jurisdiction of fishery management councils ends with the fishing community, which means they have no legal authority to force plants to upgrade to closed-cycle systems. "That's why we're calling on coastal state legislators to introduce resolutions supporting the use of closed-cycle cooling systems," Donofrio said, adding "since funds are available in the stimulus package for these upgrades, RFA is encouraging other members of the fishing community to support the efforts of our own members in requesting some of the stimulus."

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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. 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 1-888-JOIN-RFA.