



# PRESS RELEASE

## Recreational Fishing Alliance

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### **“KING OBAMA” SIGNS OCEAN PROTECTION POLICY Executive Order Circumvents Tired Old Democratic Process**

(7/20/2010) *Washington DC* - President Barack Obama used his presidential privilege on July 19 to circumvent the legislative process, signing a new ocean protection law that's vastly similar to legislation which has languished in Congress for nearly a decade. While environmental groups are hailing it a momentous day for America's oceans, the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) said these are sad times for our democratic process.

“Rep. Sam Farr of California has been pushing this ideological hogwash through the House for nearly 10 years, but every time his doomsday bill gets debated in Committee it is tossed out for being utter nonsense and a bureaucratic nightmare,” said RFA Executive Director, Jim Donofrio. “Our President appears to be infatuated with nonsense and bureaucracy, and once again proves that his authority to rule is more powerful than the legislative process alone, signing his name to decrees as if he were a king.”

The San Jose Mercury News in Congressman Farr's home district said the new policy secures Farr's longtime vision for the creation of a National Ocean Council to coordinate the many layers of state and federal regulation on such matters as offshore drilling, shipping and fishing. “At a time when science knows the oceans are dying and several politicians have known it, there's never been a crisis to drive policy, until now,” said Farr, a California democrat who the San Jose Mercury News cites has tried unsuccessfully to win a similar oceans conservation plan through legislation known as Oceans 21. “This is giant step forward,” Farr said of the presidential order, calling the decree the “clean water and air acts for the ocean.”

Oceans 21 failed to gain Congressional support because of its ability to restrict access to public resources while creating a new bureaucratic hierarchy with unprecedented power to regulate fisheries and implement ocean zoning without oversight or public input. The RFA has been in the forefront of exposing Oceans 21 and has been a leader in preventing its passage through legislative channels. On June 18, 2009, the RFA was the only national recreational fishing organization asked to testify before Congress in opposition of the bill.

“We claimed all along that this Ocean Policy Task Force was being orchestrated as Oceans 21 legislation from the very beginning, with the expectation of the environmental groups that it get passed by royal decree,” said Donofrio. “For Mr. Farr to resort to such hyperbole by claiming our oceans are dying in order to get folks to swallow his ideological pill is disingenuous at best.”

The threat of a pending presidential order set off a media firestorm in March when a national opinion piece in ESPN warned that efforts of the Obama Administration's Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force and its involvement in implementing a policy of “marine spatial planning” could ultimately effect the management of and public access to the nation's natural public resources. In response, Donofrio said at the time that he was unnerved by glaring similarities of the presidential plan and Rep. Farr's H.R. 21, the Ocean Conservation, Education, and National Strategy for the 21st Century Act. “This appears to be an attempt by the Executive branch to circumvent the established legislative process and enact policy that failed as legislation 5 years in a row,” Donofrio said at the time, adding RFA still believes enacting laws through Executive order and proclamation sets a dangerous precedence.

“Not only does this new National Ocean Council threaten to override our current federal fisheries management process, it threatens the integrity of our regional fishing councils and creates an overarching bureaucracy which could summarily dismiss all input from stakeholders,” Donofrio said. “Our current

fisheries management process might need some adjustment, but this presidential decree just sets up such an incredible bureaucratic infrastructure that Americans could find it very hard to find opportunities to fish in the future, particular in terms of coastal access,” Donofrio said.

Reports say the new National Ocean Council is being co-chaired by John Holdren, director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, and Nancy Sutley, chairwoman of the Council for Environmental Quality. The council also will include the secretaries of all Cabinet-level federal agencies and representatives of other federal environmental and economic agencies, which will oversee planning done by nine regional bodies. The RFA said more government appointments from the top down will ensure that local stakeholders can expect to get less input in the future.

“Mr. Obama has made it very clear that he and his administration know better than we do,” said Donofrio. “It’s sad to watch a guy like Congressman Farr step up and embrace the arbitrary process of executive privilege as opposed to the democratic process of review and debate in the House. Clearly it’s a win for the California Democrat who wrote an ill-conceived law which had no support from the public, none from the stakeholders and no support from fellow legislators on the Committee, yet he still got his law passed by sovereign declaration,” Donofrio said. “Doesn’t that just speak volumes about our current political climate in Washington?”

*Click here to read RFA’s written testimony on June 18, 2009-*

[http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/images/Documents/20090618/testimony\\_donofrio.pdf](http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/images/Documents/20090618/testimony_donofrio.pdf)

*Click here for the complete hearing on video (Jim Donofrio at 1:06:06 mark) -*

[http://resources.edgeboss.net/wmedia/resources/2009\\_06\\_18\\_oceans.wvx](http://resources.edgeboss.net/wmedia/resources/2009_06_18_oceans.wvx)

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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).*