



PRESS RELEASE

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CONGRESS TO ADDRESS “BURDENSOME” PRESIDENTIAL ORDER RFA Applauds House Committee Hearing On Enviro “End Run”

In March of 2010, ESPN Outdoors created a national controversy in claiming that President Obama “wants to ban sport fishing.” While the Walt Disney owned media giant has since distanced themselves from the opinion piece (along with saltwater fishing programming in general) following a wave of angry mainstream media response, the underlying truth in the report about how the President’s federal strategy “could prohibit U.S. citizens from fishing” is still alive and kicking and headed towards a Congressional hearing.

On Tuesday, October 4, 2011, the House Committee on Natural Resources will hold an oversight hearing on “The President’s New National Ocean Policy - A Plan for Further Restrictions on Ocean, Coastal and Inland Activities.” The hearing is slated to examine the job, energy and economic impacts of President Obama’s Executive Order 13547 which establishes a new National Ocean Policy and Council that could severely restrict recreational access to U.S. coastal waters.

“The President’s new National Ocean Policy is one more example of this Administration imposing burdensome federal regulations and policies that could destroy American jobs and hinder economic growth,” said Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (R-WA). “This policy requires a new federal initiative called Marine Spatial Planning, otherwise known as ocean zoning, which could place huge portions of our oceans off-limits to recreation, energy production, transportation, and other commercial activities.

Even more alarming to Rep. Hastings is that the reach of the President’s policy may in fact extend far inland, potentially impacting all activities that occur on lands adjacent to rivers, tributaries or watersheds that drain into the ocean. “The implementation of this Executive Order will have repercussions that will be felt not only on our coasts, but throughout our economy, up our rivers and into our farms and homes,” Hastings said, adding “this ‘zoning’ goes far beyond any statutory authority and strong oversight is needed over this top-down, heavily-bureaucratic initiative.”

According Jim Donofrio, executive director of the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA), it’s not the first time that the National Ocean Policy debate has come up in the Natural Resource Committee, but it is the first time since President Obama fast-tracked the policy through presidential decree. “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,” Donofrio said on July 20, 2010, after President Obama used presidential privilege to circumvent the legislative process (see full release at www.joinrfa.org/Press/KingObama_072010.pdf)

Donofrio said Rep. Farr’s “Oceans 21” legislation had languished in Congress for nearly a decade, failing to gain Congressional support because of its ability to restrict access to public resources while creating a bureaucratic hierarchy with unprecedented power to regulate fisheries and implement ocean zoning without oversight or public input. “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,” Donofrio was quoted as saying a little more than 14 months ago.

Upon notification that Rep. Hastings plans to hold an oversight hearing on the President’s overly restrictive presidential decree, Donofrio said he’s confident that the House Committee on Natural Resources will reinforce the message they’ve consistently delivered in defeating the Oceans 21 legislation during the past 10 years.

“Mr. Farr could never get this out of Committee, even under control of his own party, because the policy directives contained in the bill were onerous and too constricting for public participation in the fisheries management process,” Donofrio said. “The executive order by the president was simply an end run by this Administration’s enviro freak friends, and I hope that this bipartisan Committee steps up for the will of the people and in support of the legislative process.”

“Regrettably, Mr. Obama and his administration have displayed a pretty cavalier attitude towards the rights of U.S. citizens, but if he’s truly committed to getting Americans back to work he can take some time on Tuesday to listen in to how our democratic process works,” Donofrio said. “I’m sure the President will get an eye-opening look at how the Resource Committee approaches the right of Americans to access our public resources.”

“RFA has made it very clear, the new National Ocean Council threatens to override all of our current federal fisheries management processes, threatens the integrity of our regional fishing councils and creates an overarching bureaucracy which could summarily dismiss all input from stakeholders. Yes, it has the very real possibility of arbitrarily banning sport fishing activities throughout U.S. coastal waters, and we are absolutely opposed to this presidential decree.”

Tuesday’s 10 a.m. hearing before the full Committee will be held in Hearing Room 1324 in the Longworth House Office Building in Washington DC, and broadcast live via the web at <http://naturalresources.house.gov/live>.

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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.