



PRESS RELEASE

Recreational Fishing Alliance

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NC FISHERMEN ENCOURAGE WALMART BOYCOTT RFA Praises NCWU For Pressing Walton Family's Corporate Ethics

The North Carolina Watermen United (NCWU) this week sent a letter to the Global Ethics Office at Walmart informing them of the group's intention to boycott the store immediately. The NCWU announcement comes as a result of the Recreational Fishing Alliance's (RFA) call for a nationwide Walmart boycott by U.S. fishermen in light of the corporation's support of catch shares and marine reserves.

"By using millions of dollars in funds and working hand-in-hand with conservation agencies to influence policies that ensure that U.S. fishermen and their harvest are regulated and listed on the world commodities market by a Catch Shares system and Limited Access Licenses (probably bought by large world corporations) to harvest fish, the Walton Family Foundation violates the *Walmart Ethic – Restrictive Trade Practice*," said NCWU president Britton Shackelford. Co-signed by the entire NCWU Board of Directors, the letter references Walmart's own corporate policy which states, "we will not participate in any activity intended to restrain trade, or promote a refusal to conduct business with customers, members, or suppliers, in any country where such a refusal would be a violation of applicable law."

According to RFA executive director Jim Donofrio, catch shares and blanket marine reserves are clearly in opposition to Walmart's stated corporate ethic. "By handing over millions of dollars in support to groups like Ocean Conservancy and Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) to privatize our coastal fisheries and close down the oceans, the Walton Family Foundation is contributing directly to activities which destroy free trade in this country. If NCWU captains can't take their customers out fishing, then it's impossible for them to conduct business," Donofrio said.

Last month, RFA called for the nationwide boycott following a news release from Walmart's corporate headquarters in Bentonville, Arkansas in which the Walton Family Foundation announced investments of over \$36 million in 2010 alone to marine conservation grantees including Ocean Conservancy, Conservation International Foundation, Marine Stewardship Council, World Wildlife Fund and EDF. According to the release, the Walton Family Foundation is working "to create economic incentives for ocean conservation," while candidly pledging their support for "projects that reverse the incentives to fish unsustainably that exist in 'open access fisheries' by creating catch share programs."

"This action is in direct violation of one of the stated *Walmart Ethics – Fair Competition*, which is in place to protect free enterprise by ensuring vigorous competition and prohibiting activities that restrain trade," said Shackelford, captain of a 61-foot custom-built Outer Banks charter boat (*Doghouse*).

"With the Walton Family Foundation giving their proceeds over to groups like EDF, shopping for fishing equipment at Walmart contributes directly to the demise of our sport, it supports lost fishing opportunities and it effectively denies all Americans free and open access to our public resource," Donofrio said.

NCWU represents all professional watermen of North Carolina, including the charter/headboat industry, commercial fishermen and the customers/consumers who rely on the services they provide. Founded to protect the livelihood of the people who fish for a living while promoting enactment and enforcement of fair regulations for the regulated community, NCWU has been extremely active in legislative issues of concern to a large variety of coastal fishermen who utilized a variety of gear types.

Also signing the letter encouraging members to boycott Walmart were fellow fishermen and Board members Sonny Davis (*Capt Stacy Fishing Fleet*), Billy Maxwell (*Tuna Fever*), Ernie Foster (*Albatross Fleet*), Greg Mayer (*Fishin' Frenzy*), Tilman Gray (*Avon Seafood*), Elson Myers (*Canyon Blues*), Tom Harper (*Harper's Folly*), Jamie Reibel (*Phideaux*), Glen Hopkins (*FV Watersport*), Duke Spencer (*Captain Duke*), Matt Huth (*FV Hardway*) and Rom Whitaker (*Release*).

“I hope all RFA members across the country will follow NCWU’s lead on this,” Donofrio said, adding “though it would be nice to see our national boating and tackle industry help spread the message by also pulling their product off Walmart’s shelves in support of our coastal for-hire fleet and local tackle shops.”

Donofrio and the RFA say that legislative efforts to reform the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act are underway in Congress and that with subtle fixes to the federal fisheries law the preservationist community’s two-pronged attack with catch shares and marine reserves should essentially die out. “We need an act of Congress to fix our broken fisheries law, but America’s fishermen could also use an act of corporate integrity to the cause of fair competition and access as well.”

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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.