



PRESS RELEASE

Recreational Fishing Alliance

176 B South New York Road, Galloway, NJ 08205
P: 1-888-564-6732 F: 609-404-1968

For Immediate Release
Contact: Jim Hutchinson, Jr.

February 3, 2010,
888 564-6732

SC GENERAL ASSEMBLY SAYS “NO” TO FISHING CLOSURES

In a concurrent resolution, the South Carolina General Assembly is working to oppose any fishing area closures off the coast of South Carolina associated with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's (SAFMC) proposed amendment 17A to the fishery management plan for the grouper/snapper fishery. Two bills currently in the Assembly are H 4497 and S 1095 and call upon the SAFMC to not adopt any version of Amendment 17A that includes the closure of areas off the coast of South Carolina to be closed to fishing activities.

South Carolina members of the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) lobbied the general assembly extensively to garner support of this very important issue, and the response from the General Assembly is applauded by RFA and its South Carolina Members. “We need these passed immediately,” said RFA-SC member Cantey Smith of Charleston. “These bills advocate protection of our economy, jobs, our ability to do what we love and the state of our offshore fishery. Smith stressed that fellow South Carolina anglers should contact their local legislator asking for support of the resolutions, adding “South Carolina values are at stake here.”

In the resolution sponsored by Rep. Thad Viers of Myrtle Beach, Sen. Ray Cleary of Georgetown, Horry and Charleston Counties and Sen. Ronnie Cromer of Lexington, Newberry and Saluda Counties, South Carolina Assembly members made it very clear that the proposal under consideration for closures by the SAFMC were “unjustifiable and would create severe economic hardship to the state and its coastal counties, including significant job loss at a time when job creation is badly needed and is a priority.”

“Between NOAA restrictions on snapper and grouper, and the proposal to shut down the entire coast to bottomfishing, I’m not sure how much our coastal sector can bend,” said Charleston charter captain, Mark Brown. “Our local fishing industry is close to broke as it is now.”

The concurrent resolution reads that “any closed area to fishing off the coast of South Carolina will result in excessive fishing pressure on the remaining open areas, causing localized depletion of fish species, further, seriously impacting fishermen, employment, and the local economy.” Furthermore, the Assembly “strongly urged representatives of South Carolina on the SAMFC to cast votes in opposition to any amendment that will result in any area of the state’s coast being closed to fishing of any kind.”

Ideally, RFA would like to see other coastal states within the SAFMC domain follow suit before the council reconvenes in March to vote on the area closures. “RFA is thankful to Congressman Henry Brown for contacting members of the General Assembly in South Carolina to get this done,” said Jim Donofrio, Executive Director of the RFA. “Mr. Brown is primary co-sponsor of HR 1584, the Flexibility in Rebuilding American Fisheries Act, and a champion for science-based and sustainable fisheries management. We would like to see more of our coastal legislators step up on behalf of its constituents the way these South Carolina representatives have,” Donofrio said.

#####

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. Visit www.joinrfa.org.