



PRESS RELEASE

Recreational Fishing Alliance

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HOUSE VOTES TO STOP NEW CATCH SHARE FUNDING RFA To “Rally” Key Senate Allies For Support

The House of Representatives last night voted 220-191 to pass the Southerland-Grimm Amendment to close the loophole created by environmental special interest groups to expand Limited Access Privilege Programs or “catch shares,” along the Atlantic Coast and Gulf of Mexico.

The amendment was brought to the floor of the House by Rep. Steve Southerland (R-FL) at 10:54 p.m. with the co-authored support of Rep. Michael Grimm (R-NY), prompting a five-minute debate amongst bipartisan coastal members of Congress. After picking up the support of key members from across the aisle including Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA), Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ) and Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY), the Southerland-Grimm amendment was approved by roll call vote sometime after 11 p.m. (To see how your House member voted, go to <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2012/roll223.xml>.)

The approved amendment to the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2013 would prohibit use of appropriated funds from being used to develop, approve, or implement a new limited access privilege program that is not already developed, approved, or implemented for any fishery under the jurisdiction of the South Atlantic, Mid-Atlantic, New England, or Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council.

Now that the House has approved the measure, it’s up to the U.S. Senate to put forth the measure for final enactment. The Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) is hoping to count on the support of key Senate members who attended the Keep Fishermen Fishing rally on March 21, including Sen. Charles Schumer (D-NY), Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Sen. John Kerry (D-MA), Sen. Scott Brown (R-MA), and Sen. Kay Hagan (D-NC).

“We applaud the efforts of Rep. Grimm and Rep. Southerland, not only for getting this vote to the floor but for their ability to successfully debate this issue with fellow members of Congress to see it get passed,” said RFA executive director Jim Donofrio. “There was certainly some partisan opposition to this effort, but for the coastal legislators who understand what’s been going on back at home for the past 3-1/2 years, the united efforts of Republicans and Democrats alike was what got this important amendment through.”

In a letter to colleagues released before the vote last night, Rep. Grimm and Rep. Southerland explained “catch shares are no different than any other inside-the-Beltway style tactic determined to destroy every aspect of American freedom under the guise of conservation. By capping the amount of fish that may be caught annually and gifting a select few with shares of the annual catch, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is privatizing access to a once open fishery. Make no mistake about it: catch shares are nothing less than a cap-and-trade management system for our oceans.”

Donofrio reinforced information contained in the Southerland-Grimm letter by explaining that the amendment doesn’t change current catch share regulations. “The vote last night simply prevents funding within the FY2013 appropriations from developing, approving, or implementing catch share programs that have not already been developed, approved, or implemented,” Donofrio said.

“Rep. Walter Jones of North Carolina is a great friend to the fishermen who was wrapped up in a primary election yesterday and could not participate in the vote, but he had tried hard to put forth a similar measure in 2011 to stop NOAA from developing and approving these cap and trade fisheries policies,” Donofrio said. “The problem with dealing with an arrogant government agency like NOAA is that if you give them a loophole for implementing these programs, they’ll completely ignore the spirit and intent of any congressional mandate.”

RFA said that NOAA Administrator Dr. Jane Lubchenco, who helped author the official 'catch share manual' while working with Environmental Defense Fund prior to her presidential appointment in 2009, has essentially put the power of catch share development and approval into the hands of a few hand-selected appointments to the regional fisheries councils.

"What's happening at the council level however is that the NOAA catch share policy is being herded through the regional process by their plants towards final implementation, and we're happy that key staffers in Rep. Southerland's office have been attending Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council meetings during the past two years to see what's actually happening under this administration," Donofrio said.

RFA is actively encouraging other coastal Members of Congress to consider sending staffers to regional fishery council meetings to gain a better understanding of the process by which this Administration has all but neglected the input of local fishermen. "It's an eye-opener watching NOAA's arrogance at work from a local level," Donofrio said.

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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.