



# PRESS RELEASE

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## **BIPARTISAN SUPPORT GROWS FOR REAL MAGNUSON REFORM Momentum Builds For March 21, 2012 Fishermen's Rally In Washington DC**

The Gloucester Times today reported that both of Massachusetts' U.S. senators, Democrat John Kerry and Republican Scott Brown, are anxious to speak with attendees at the second national fishermen's rally to be held in Washington DC on March 21. The Keep Fishermen Fishing rally in March has been organized since mid-January in an effort by leaders from both the recreational and commercial fishing industries to unite under one shared message, to 'reform Magnuson now.'

Efforts to incorporate limited management flexibility in the federal fisheries law have been underway since 2007, not long after the President signed off on the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act which helped remove most abilities for regional fisheries councils to circumvent rigid statutory requirements based on arbitrary schedules, incomplete data and often random definitions.

Sen. Brown had just been officially sworn in at the time of the original United We Fish rally in February of 2010 and made a surprise appearance at the rally promising to educate himself about fisheries. Since then, Brown has thrust himself into the fight with the Obama administration that intensified over the two years since the initial event drawing around 5,000 industry representatives from all four coasts. Responding to the Gloucester Times piece, Sen. Brown said today via Twitter, "Looking forward to speaking at this year's fishing rally."

The effectiveness of that bipartisan (Democrat and Republican, commercial and recreational) coalition has been somewhat limited by key Democrats' unwillingness to press their own party's president for real, practical changes in fisheries regulation and management, though today's announcement by Sen. Kerry in support of the upcoming rally is indication that things may be about to change in favor of the fishermen.

"Sen. Kerry believes that additional flexibility is needed to help our fishermen," said his spokeswoman, Whitney Smith.

"(Fishermen) don't care about politics," Kerry said in an email obtained by the Gloucester Times. "They just want to be able to make a living, and Washington needs to hear them and talk to them in a way that's honest and fair."

"They don't expect Washington to solve their problems," he added, "but they sure as hell expect Washington to understand their problems and talk to them with respect."

"We would be honored to have Sen. Kerry attend the rally in support of pragmatic Magnuson reform," said Jim Donofrio, executive director of the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA), a primary organizer and sponsor of the Keep Fishermen Fishing rally set for March 21 at Upper Senate Park in DC. "This is a jobs issue for U.S. recreational and commercial fishing industry folks."

RFA and fellow organizers have said they are keeping a mostly open invitation for other Members of Congress who would like to address the fleet expected to arrive at Upper Senate Park in DC on the morning of March 21, a date picked specifically when Congress was in session. Bus efforts are currently underway in New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina and Florida to transport fishermen to and from the event, which RFA expects to pick up momentum in the days ahead.

“We’ve talked personally with many fishing clubs, particularly in the Mid-Atlantic region who are contacting local car rental agencies like Hertz and Enterprise to find out about van rentals to take smaller groups of 10 to 20,” said Jim Hutchinson, RFA’s managing director, who added “there are several bigger charter buses already set up to take large groups from some of the popular charter and headboat ports.”

New York buses planned thus far leave Point Lookout and Sheepshead Bay and have been donated by captains aboard the F/V Stirs, party boats Marilyn Jean, Brooklyn VI and the Ocean Eagle as well as FishingUnited.com. In New Jersey, the Save the Summer Flounder Fishery Fund has four buses leaving Bogan’s Boat Basin and Wildwood Fishing Center. Ocean Isle Fishing Center in North Carolina has put together a bus effort in Ocean Isle Beach while Tailwalker Marine is planning to leave Georgetown, SC early on the day of the event. Meanwhile, Raffield Fisheries is organizing a bus effort out of Panama City in Florida leaving on Tuesday, March 20.

“Grassroots organizers are busy filling seats, and RFA is encouraging anglers to visit the Keep Fishermen Fishing website to get those buses packed so that we can add more in the coming days,” Hutchinson said. While organizers key in on the bus efforts around the country, the Members of Congress who are interested in addressing the thousands of fishermen expected to assemble at Upper Senate Park in March are encouraged to look closely at the legislation now being addressed in the House Natural Resources Committee to reform the federal fisheries law.

“The legislators who are committed to addressing the issues vital to all of our coastal fishing regions are those who are committed to putting forth the language contained in HR3061 to help provide relief from excessive regulations being experienced in many different stocks from New England cod to Gulf red snapper, that’s who we’re hoping will join us on stage in March,” Donofrio said.

HR3061, the Flexibility and Access in Rebuilding American Fisheries Act of 2011, is sponsored by Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ) and has the support of 14 additional bipartisan, coastal co-sponsors including Rep. Rob Andrews (D-NJ), Rep. Tim Bishop (D-NY), Rep. Barney Frank (D-MA), Rep. Donna Christensen (D-VI), Rep. Ander Crenshaw (R-FL), Rep. Michael Grimm (R-NY), Rep. Colleen Hanabusa (D-HI), Rep. Walter Jones (R-NC), Rep. Peter King (R-NY), Rep. Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ), Rep. Tim Scott (R-SC), Rep. Steve Southerland (R-FL), Rep. John Tierney (D-MA) and Rep. Bob Turner (R-NY).

In addition to extending rebuilding timelines in certain situations (which could have a dramatic impact on the New England cod situation), HR3061 would also allow the Secretary of Commerce to suspend rigid annual catch limits and accountability measures for fish stocks where science and data is lacking, calls for socioeconomic impact studies when certain management decisions are made, and would require the National Research Council to perform another comprehensive review of the NOAA recreational data collection programs which were to have been completed as of 2009.

“This is responsible Magnuson reform that truly addresses the science and statistical deficiencies at NOAA and better balances commerce with conservation, something that our coastal fishing communities have always supported,” said Donofrio. “This is about access to healthy, sustainable fisheries, a message which all fishermen should be proud to unite behind.”

For more information about the rally including bus departure information, visit [www.keepfishermenfishing.com](http://www.keepfishermenfishing.com).

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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).*