



U.S. Coastal Fishermen to Rally in DC March 21

“Keep Fishermen Fishing” Organizers Unite to Fix Federal Fisheries Law

In another historic show of solidarity, U.S. recreational and commercial fishermen will gather beside the U.S. Capitol on March 21, 2012 in an organized demonstration supporting the amendment of the Magnuson Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson Act). Signed into law in 1976, in recent years the Act has been transformed from its original intent, to conserve our nation's fish and support our nation's fishermen, into a weapon employed by a handful of mega-foundations and the anti-fishing ENGOs they support to drive fishermen off the water.

A rally on February 24, 2010, under a United We Fish™ banner, brought some 5,000 recreational, commercial and party/charter vessel owners and folks in associated businesses from all over the country to Washington. More than two dozen members of the Senate and the House of Representatives took time out from their busy schedules to address the crowd.

The March 21 rally is being billed as *Keep Fishermen Fishing*, and once again will unite the commercial, and recreational sectors under one common message: fair access to the seas.

The initial Washington rally was a monumental success that helped put the plight of America's coastal fisherman and those in related businesses in the public eye. However, a continuous stream of regulatory requirements are leading to unnecessary and unacceptable restrictions in demonstrably sustainable fisheries.

As a consequence, the American public is being denied access to the food and fun of this tremendous natural resource.

Most U.S. fisheries are in better shape biologically than they've been for a generation or more. In fact, last year NOAA Fisheries scientists announced that 84% of U.S. fish stocks studied for fishing activity were not experiencing overfishing as of 2010. However, despite the heavy sacrifices on the part of coastal fishermen, the same federal agency in charge of managing the resource has been using a broken law to mete out broken promises upon these constituents to ratchet down regulations as fisheries continue to rebuild.

In December 2011, the House Natural Resources Committee held a hearing in which several pieces of legislation to reform Magnuson were heard and debated, providing ample evidence that coastal communities are suffering from the weight of over burdensome regulation due to the rigid statutory definitions written into the federal fisheries law.

As was the case in 2010, we are anticipating foundation-funded ENGO lobbying disguised as a grass-roots fishermen's effort aimed at marginalizing our Keep Fishermen Fishing rally. The message that they will be relaying to Congress is that truly conservation-minded recreational, commercial and party/charter fishermen fully support the Magnuson Act as it is today and oppose any efforts to amend it. The truly conservation-minded fishermen won't be those walking the halls of Congress trying to sell their anti-fishing message because of foundation/ENGO funding, they'll be the people who are there on their own dime and who are committed to returning to a federal fisheries management system that recognizes that they and the fishing communities they support are as important as the fish are.

Final details of the 2012 Keep Fishermen Fishing rally are being put in place, including transportation from coastal communities across the country.

For information on how you can get involved in the national rally to help Keep Fishermen Fishing, call 888-564-6732. For more information on the rally as it becomes available, including bus sign-up information and details from the 2010 rally, visit www.keepfishermenfishing.com. You can also stay up to date with developments via “Keep Fishermen Fishing” on Facebook and can follow developments on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/#!/FishMarchDC2012>.