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Press Release

ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE FUND, BULLYING FISHERMEN AND COMMUNITIES OVER CATCH SHARES

Gulf of Mexico, November 24, 2009:

A radical environmental group is trying to influence fishing in the Gulf of Mexico. All five Gulf Governors sent a letter to Secretary of Commerce Locke objecting to catch shares for the recreational sector and expressing concern over the red snapper commercial IFQ (catch share) that is in place in the Gulf. They did this out of concern for their constituents and small businesses.

The Governors wrote, "We are concerned that in the desire to adopt and implement catch share systems NOAA has forgotten its most fundamental responsibility under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to maximize the net economic value from the use of a public resource. Recreational fishing is an important activity in all of our states, and one that we would like to see continue to grow as a healthy activity for the public. However, we are concerned that NOAA policies could frustrate our ability to do that. "They also asked Secretary Locke to allow them the ability to protect their citizen's access to public fishery resources and assure proper allocation of the resource in advance of implementing any catch share program. This was in regard to the grouper commercial IFQ program that is in line to be implemented in January of next year.

The Environmental Defense Fund is anti fishing and have become the bullies on the water with their seemingly unlimited budget. They continue to eliminate people from fisheries and by further dividing sectors it allows them to herd out the weakest sub-sector and then eliminate them bit by bit. In the Gulf they have convinced a small minority (less than 7%) of the federally permitted recreational charter boats to support separating from the recreational anglers who fish on their back decks.

Now radical activists of Environmental Defense are bullying people and trying to get them to sign an EDF petition stating that the five Governors made a mistake in writing this letter to the Secretary. The Governor's stood up on behalf of their constituents and coastal communities in a public forum through proper channels. EDF continues back door under the table tactics that ultimately takes away anglers rights to their resources.

For Release 7 a.m. CST, November 25, 2009

On November 15, 2009 Dr. Damon Cummings had a letter to the editor published in the Gloucester Daily Times that spotlighted flaws in forcing catch shares on fishermen. It follows this text. Read it and pay close attention to what he says. This is just more info on the tactics used by the bullies at the EDF.

If you are approached to sign such a petition, read it carefully, do not be BULLIED to sign away your ability to fish!

Gloucester Daily Times

Letter to the editor: ED forum spotlights flaws in forcing catch shares here

November 15, 2009 10:30 pm

To the editor:

For those who could not attend, this is what I got out of the presentation at The Gloucester House sponsored by the Environmental Defense Fund last week.

I did not think the presentations by the fishermen from Alaska were flawed. They were very clear about the situation being very different in the various Alaska fisheries and certainly they made no attempt to say what they experienced was applicable to our situation. In particular, they emphasized that the moves to catch shares in Alaska were motivated by crashes in stocks and consequent financial disasters and lives lost in making 12-hour halibut openings in storms.

The crab stocks in particular plummeted in the span of one year to a state where the fishermen simply could not continue. The crab boats went from 266 to 80 as the catch shares were implemented. I got the impression that they might have gone from 266 to zero if the catch shares were not done and if a massive boat buyback program were not initiated.

Each of the plans was crafted for the particular fishery and the particular community social structure affected. They were initiated by the fishermen, not by the government, and were planned over long time periods. They had no experience whatsoever with multi-species plans and made no attempt to suggest what ought to be done here.

Our situation here is totally different. We do not have a collapse of fish stocks. They are, in fact, recovering nicely.

Our crisis here is government bureaucrat induced and not caused by a crisis in the fisheries. The catch share ultimatum is not crafted by fishermen, but is being forced upon the fishing community for reasons that are not clear to me.

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The Alaska representatives made clear that many boats would leave the fleet, something that was inevitable in the Alaska fisheries because of their state of collapse, no matter what plan was adopted — but not necessarily the case here.

They made clear that the costs of record keeping and observers was huge, and acceptable only in a big boat industrial fishery context. It was inconceivable in a small boat fleet and in fact their inshore boats (under 60 feet) are not observed causing much disgruntlement among others.

In their various fleets all sorts of measures were taken to prevent consolidation of shares in outside corporations and to protect fishing communities. (limiting stacking, controlling ownership, community ownership, boat buybacks, rules about where boats could take out....)

I do not sense that any of the mitigating planning that protected their communities and fisher folk has taken or is taking place here.

Dr. Damon Cummings

Gloucester

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