



Protecting the livelihood of the people who fish for a living

## March 2010 Newsletter

### RALLY IN WASHINGTON DC

We left at “dark-thirty” in the morning, in the words of Tall Bill Van Drutan, a long-time Hatteras fisherman. A bus from Avon, two buses from Wanchese & Manteo, two from New Bern, another from Ocean Isle & Wilmington brought commercial fishermen, charter/headboat captains, boat mates, seafood dealers, loyal customers, friends and wives and sisters and brothers and school-kids to Washington DC for the United We Fish Rally held on Wednesday, February 24, 2010. Others flew in or car-pooled to the Rally.



The Rally was held to support the Flexibility in the Rebuilding of American Fisheries Act introduced in the US Senate (S 1255) by Senator Charles Schumer, D-NY, and in the House by Representatives (HR 1584) by Representative Frank Pallone, D-NJ, to amend the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. S 1255 and HR 1584 would allow flexibility in the time tables for the rebuilding of fish stocks; more time for some species and a re-opening of many closed fisheries where the stocks have already rebuilt and are healthy in less than the defined ten-year period. Flexibility would also allow the time for accurate stock assessments to be made that could be used for Fishery decisions, instead of the “best available” data which is often incomplete or inaccurate.

The Recreational Fishing Alliance, started in New Jersey and Florida, was the lead sponsor for the Rally. Fishermen from those two states were joined by others from North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New York, Massachusetts and small contingencies from California and Alaska. The program was very organized; a stage - with a huge United We Fish banner as a backdrop - had chairs, a podium and an excellent sound system that did not have to be tapped on or readjusted, even once – quite an accomplishment in the

outdoors in the 40 degree temperatures. The United We Fish theme emphasized the “joining together” of commercial fishermen, charter/headboat operators and recreational fishermen to seek help with the MSA. North Carolina has had this kind of unity since the formation of the North Carolina Watermen United in 2005. The NCWU is an organization of commercial, charter/headboat and recreational fishermen which has always been dedicated to “Protecting Your Freedom to Fish.”

US Congressional Senators and Representatives from both parties met one another going up and down the steps as they squeezed in time during a busy legislative day to speak to the gathering for 6 – 7 minutes and assure the audience of their support for Flexibility in MSA.

Representative Walter Jones, R-NC, a long-time friend of the North Carolina Fisheries, pledged support for the Bill and added “We’ve got a report from the IG that shows the injustices fishermen have known about,” a reference to the investigation into wrong-doing by law enforcement agents for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and its National Marine Fisheries Service. After his speech, Jones made himself available during the Rally to talk with his constituents to better help them.

Senator Kay Hagan, D-NC, citing her family heritage of fishing, gave an enthusiastic speech and promised her support. Representative Mike McIntyre, D-NC, pledged his support. Senator Richard Burr, R-NC, stood in the middle of a circle of North Carolinians under the trees after the Rally and vowed to help.

Senator Schumer and Representative Pallone, the initial sponsors of the Bills gave short speeches. Others who expressed their understanding of the issue and their support included Representative Barney Frank, D-MA; Representative John Mica, D-FL; Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, D-NY; and the newly elected Senator Scott Brown, R-MA.

And the fishermen, the center of this Rally, stood and listened from noon until 3:00 pm, barely moving in the chilly winds. These people - the ones who run the boats and find the fish and catch the fish; the ones who are usually giving orders and doing the talking - stood and

listened. The fishermen listened and heard, for the first time in too many years, bi-partisan legislators make public promises to help them: "We hear you; we know you are not asking for subsidies or hand-outs; we know you are only asking to be allowed to work; we hear you."

The crowd, estimated at over 5000, was quiet and respectful. Many of them carried American flags and printed red-and-white signs saying, "Flexibility in MSA" or "I Fish, I Vote." Some carried hand-made signs that read "Help Fishermen Keep Jobs" or "No Catch Shares." The few cat-calls from frustrated fishermen heard at the beginning of the Rally died away to nothing.

Spokespersons for many of the delegations gave 2 – 3 minute pep talks. Britt Shackelford, NCWU President, summed up what must be in the minds of most of those fishermen when he said, "I do not fish to make a living, a fisherman is what I AM!"

A long list of fishermen and fishing industry leaders spoke including Sean McKeon, President of the North Carolina Fishing Association; Mark Brown, fisherman from South Carolina and Jim Donofrio, Executive Director of the Recreational Fishing Alliance.

Feelings of understated, upbeat optimism surfaced at the end of the Rally.

Bryan Mattingly, charter boat operator and commercial fisherman from Hatteras said, "The Rally was excellent. My concern is if it will work out for us. I want to see it happen NOW before there are more closures."

Dewey Hemilright, commercial fisherman from Wanchese said, "It was great to see people from up and down the coast working together; this has not always been the case. I am optimistic that Congress will help us. They voted the authorization for the 2007 reforms in MSA which have caused us so much trouble. It is up to Congress to FIX THE PROBLEM and help us keep our jobs."

Sonny Davis, fleet operator-owner from Morehead City said, "The Rally had both Democrats and Republicans who made good speeches on our behalf. I was glad to see the commercial and recreational fishermen working together. I feel it is the best thing that's happened in a very long time. All the people with us – some of them not fishermen, but our supporters - were very glad they came on the long bus ride."

Cliff ("Doc") Parker, charter boat operator said, "The Rally was like a Tea Party for Fishermen!"

Tilman and Bonnie Gray, wholesale seafood dealers from Avon said, "If the politicians keep their promises like they said, it will be great."

Austin Shackelford, 13, son of Britt and Audra, had said early in the morning, "I'm going to get to see how government works."

And today he saw; we all saw, grass-roots democracy working at its best.

Melba Milak  
February 25, 2010



[To see thank you letter from Congressman Walter B Jones click here.](#)



## You Can Help!

The NCWU has sent letters to all of the North Carolina US Congressional Delgation asking for their support of Senate Bill 1255 and House Resolution 1584 and thanking those that have already pledged their support.

Both Senators appeared at the Rally and promised to help.

Representatives Walter Jones (District 3) and Mike McIntyre (District 7) also gave speeches at the Rally to support fishermen. If you live in another district, please contact your Representative by phone or email your Representative and ask them for support for HR 1584; they will only accept emails from people in their own District.

The email addresses are long and have many letters and symbols. If they do not work, go to Google; type in your District Representative's name and follow the instructions to contact.

District & Name	DC Telephone	Internet Contact
1 G. K. Butterfield	202-225-3101	<a href="http://butterfield.house.gov/contactinfo.asp">http://butterfield.house.gov/contactinfo.asp</a>
6 Howard Coble	202-225-3065	<a href="mailto:howard.coble@mail.house.gov">howard.coble@mail.house.gov</a>
2 Bobby Etheridge	202-225-4531	<a href="http://etheridge.house.gov/Contact/">http://etheridge.house.gov/Contact/</a>
5 Virginia Foxx	202-225-2071	<a href="http://www.house.gov/formfoxx/IMA/issue_subscribe.htm">http://www.house.gov/formfoxx/IMA/issue_subscribe.htm</a>
3 Walter B. Jones	202-225-3415	<a href="http://jones.house.gov/contact_form_email.cfm">http://jones.house.gov/contact_form_email.cfm</a>
8 Larry Kissell	202-225-3715	<a href="http://forms.house.gov/kissell/contact-form.shtml">http://forms.house.gov/kissell/contact-form.shtml</a>
10 Patrick McHenry	202-225-2576	<a href="http://mchenry.house.gov/zipauth.htm">http://mchenry.house.gov/zipauth.htm</a>
7 Mike McIntyre	202-225-2731	<a href="http://www.house.gov/mcintyre/issue.shtml">http://www.house.gov/mcintyre/issue.shtml</a>
13 Brad Miller	202-225-3032	<a href="http://bradmiller.house.gov/?sectionid=17&amp;Siontree=917">http://bradmiller.house.gov/?sectionid=17&amp;Siontree=917</a>
9 Sue Myrick	202-225-1976	<a href="http://myrick.house.gov/zipauth.shtml">http://myrick.house.gov/zipauth.shtml</a>
4 David E. Price	202-225-1784	<a href="http://price.house.gov/contact_form1.shtml">http://price.house.gov/contact_form1.shtml</a>
11 Heath Shuler	202-225-6401	<a href="http://www.house.gov/writerep/">http://www.house.gov/writerep/</a>
12 Melvin L. Watt	202-225-1510	<a href="http://watt.house.gov/IQform.asp">http://watt.house.gov/IQform.asp</a>
Senator Richard Burr	202-224-3154	<a href="http://burr.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Contact.Home">http://burr.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Contact.Home</a>
Senator Kay Hagan	202-224-6342	<a href="mailto:Senator_Hagan@hagan.senate.gov">Senator_Hagan@hagan.senate.gov</a>

## North Carolina Watermen United



### Membership Appreciation Socials

**Wednesday- March 24 - 6:00 to 8:00 pm**  
**Darrell's Restaurant**

**Monday - April 5 – 5:00 to 7:00 pm**  
**Sonny's Restaurant**

**Morehead City Social to be announced**

**All 2009 and 2010 Members**  
**Are invited free of charge**  
**Guests - \$20.00 each**

# Great food Buffet – Raffle Prizes

For more information  
Call Robbi 252-475-1133  
Or email [RobbiofNCWU@yahoo.com](mailto:RobbiofNCWU@yahoo.com)