



FISHERMEN'S NEWS

November 2010

The Advocate for the Independent Fisherman

\$2.00



Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations

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Saving Coastal Jobs (S. 3528; H.R. 4914)

By Lee Crockett and Zeke Grader

Fish have been a staple in our diet, and an important part of our country's economic engine, since its beginning. In 2006 alone, recreational and commercial fishing activity supported more than 2 million jobs around the United States, and Americans spent more than \$69 billion on seafood.

Unfortunately, we have as a nation been too lax about protecting our marine resources and the communities and jobs

populations – including some tuna, cod, flounder, snapper and grouper species – are severely depleted.

The collapse of the salmon fishery along the Pacific Coast presents a compelling case in point. Once the economic mainstay of both the commercial and recreational fishing industries from California to Washington, salmon have been decimated by decades of habitat destruction, dams and water diversions. The

time, we must provide struggling fishing communities with the resources they need to transition to a more sustainable and profitable future.

One important first step would be Congressional action on this bill, which was introduced – with bipartisan support – in the House in March (H.R. 4914) and the Senate (as S. 3528) in June, 2010. It would fund new jobs for fishermen, promote the restoration of fisheries and revitalize working waterfronts. And while this bill was conceived before the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, these types of projects are exactly what's needed to help hard-hit fishing communities around the Gulf of Mexico.

The bill would aid coastal regions by creating new cooperative research opportunities for fishermen to work with fishery scientists gathering much-needed information about the health of marine ecosystems. It also would allow fishermen payment for using their own boats to reduce marine debris and restore habitats – activities that would benefit both fishermen and fish alike.

The bill would help revitalize working waterfronts, benefiting local businesses and maintaining the quality of life. While the jobs created would be new, the ideas behind these projects are already tried and true.

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dependent on the ocean. A new bill in Congress, however, the *Coastal Jobs Creation Act of 2010* (SB 3528), could help our coastal environment, as well as fishing communities – and the jobs they support – in the Gulf of Mexico and across the nation that have been hit hard by declining fish populations.

We've damaged our nation's fish populations by failing to protect the basic habitats fish need to survive. In the United States, nearly a quarter of our commercially important ocean fish

subsequent collapse of these fish populations has resulted in vanished jobs, lost family income and declining local tax revenues.

A similar story played out with different fish in New England and elsewhere around the nation. We can't afford to continue managing our scarce marine resources so carelessly.

One answer to the current economic problems facing many coastal communities is to restore fish habitat, and thus rebuild fish populations. At the same



For example, since 1999 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has administered a cooperative research program in New England, where scientists and regional universities work with fishermen to help bolster local jobs and healthy regional fish populations. This has included running programs to develop environmentally friendly yet commercially practical fishing gear, collecting biological data on fish populations and conducting outreach to fishermen.

To date, this project has provided roughly \$55 million for local research involving over 700 commercial fishing vessel owners as well as 100 ocean-linked businesses in New England. And there are many other examples of successful programs in Louisiana, California and elsewhere around the United States.

For countless generations of Americans, the bounty of our oceans has provided an important source of both food and commerce. It is now time, however, for us to help safeguard the health of our marine ecosystems – because if we take better care of our oceans, their bounty will continue to provide for us, much as it has in generations past.

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The Coastal Jobs Creation Act of 2010 (S. 3528; H.R. 4914)

Senator Olympia J. Snowe (R-Maine) and nine original cosponsors introduced S. 3528, the “Coastal Jobs Creation Act of 2010,” on June 24, 2010. A House version (H.R. 4914) was introduced on March 23, 2010, by Rep. Frank Pallone, and now has 78 cosponsors.

What is the Coastal Jobs Creation Act of 2010?

The Coastal Jobs Creation Act of 2010 is new legislation that creates jobs for fishermen and coastal communities as fish populations rebuild.

What does the Coastal Jobs Creation Act of 2010 do?

The Coastal Jobs Creation Act of 2010 creates a grant program, called the “Coastal Jobs Creation Grant Program,” to fund new jobs for fishermen that will promote sustainable fisheries and fishing communities, revitalize waterfronts and improve the ocean environment.

What kinds of jobs and activities would be funded through the Coastal Jobs Creation Act of 2010?

- Cooperative research between fishermen and scientists to:
- Collect data on economic and social impacts of fisheries management
- Restore habitats
- Enhance stock assessments
- Reduce bycatch (capture of non-target ocean wildlife)
- Train and engage coastal communities in implementing projects to restore and protect habitat benefiting marine wildlife
- Support the training and deploying of fisheries observers
- Revitalize working waterfronts and ports
- Test and deploy new weather monitoring technologies that will help small fishing operations
- Test and deploy new coastal habitat monitoring technology
- Improve fishing data
- Preserve and restore the ocean environment, including research within the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, the National Marine Sanctuary System, and coral reef ecosystems
- Use fishermen and their boats to reduce and prevent marine debris

How does this bill ensure that fishermen and coastal communities will benefit from this new grant program?

- All activities funded through the grant program must:
- Provide the maximum number of jobs and long-term benefits for fishing communities
- Improve fisheries management decisions
- Contribute to restoring and protecting coastal and ocean ecosystems

For the most current information on these bills, see the Library of Congress's THOMAS Congressional bill search engine at: <http://thomas.loc.gov>.