



# PRESS RELEASE

## Recreational Fishing Alliance

PO Box 3080 New Gretna, NJ 08224  
P: 1-888-564-6732 F: 609-294-3816

For immediate release: November 3, 2003  
Contact: Michael Doebley, Deputy Director of Government Affairs  
1-888-JOIN-RFA

### **Morrissey and Fallon Introduce MA Freedom to Fish Act**

(Boston)- Senator Michael W. Morrissey (D-Quincy) and Representative Christopher G. Fallon (D-Malden) have introduced the Massachusetts Freedom to Fish Act (Senate Bill 2043 & House Docket Number 4107). The bill is co-sponsored by Senator Bruce E. Tarr (R-Gloucester) and Senator Robert E. Hedlund (R-Plymouth).

The bill has been scheduled for a hearing before the General Court Joint Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources for November 13<sup>th</sup> at 10am in room A-2 of the State House.

This bill establishes standards for the use of "no-fishing" Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) as a fishery management tool in any of the Commonwealth's waters.

"Recreational fishing is one of the most popular outdoor activities in this state. It adds a lot to our quality of life here in Massachusetts," said Senator Morrissey. "Massachusetts has a thriving recreational fishing industry which includes anglers, boat builders, retailers, party and charter boat businesses, marinas, and many others up and down our coast."

"Over half a million anglers fish in Massachusetts waters each year making a major contribution to the state and local economies," said Representative Fallon. "This bill establishes standards that must be met before any of our waters can be closed to all fishing."

According to a 2002 report from two independent consulting firms, 615,300 anglers fished in Massachusetts's waters in 2001 a total of 7,685,000 fishing days for a total economic output of \$888,486,177 million.

"Our ocean, bays and estuaries are some of Massachusetts' most important natural resources and they must be managed effectively," said Senator Tarr. "The marine environment can be adequately protected without unnecessarily closing off areas to fishermen."

Recreational fishermen have long demonstrated a commitment to conservation by seeking and supporting effective fishery management plans, participating in voluntary research programs and educational outreach, and practicing ethical fishing.

The MA Freedom to Fish Act prohibits closures to fishing unless there is a clear indication that fishing is causing a specific conservation problem and that less severe measures will not be adequate. This bill would also require periodic review of any closures, a scientific basis for the size of any closure, and provisions to reopen areas to fishing whenever the basis for the closure no longer exists.

Spearheaded by the RFA, the bill is supported by a coalition of Massachusetts recreational and commercial fishing organizations including the Massachusetts Striped Bass Association, Massachusetts Beach Buggy Association, Plum Island Surfcasters, Marblehead Surfcasters, Northeast Charter Boat Association, Stellwagen Bank Charter Captains Association and Green Harbor Tuna Club.

“This initiative is in response to a misguided environmental movement to close off vast areas of our oceans by creating no-fishing MPAs,” said Jim Donofrio, Executive Director of the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA). “Right now, recreational and commercial fishermen in California are facing a closure of some of their state’s best fishing grounds.”

“We’re not out to ban MPAs,” added Mr. Donofrio. “We’re out to establish standards before they are used.”

“Massachusetts fishermen are fortunate to have friends like Representative Fallon, and Senators Morrissey, Tarr, and Hedlund in office,” said Mike Flaherty, political committee Chairman for the Massachusetts Striped Bass Association. “The MA Freedom to Fish Act is a proactive bill that will enhance our ability to go out and enjoy the great fishing opportunities we have here in Massachusetts.”

“The use of MPAs in one form or another is not new,” said Senator Hedlund. “What is new is the push to exclude fishing from an area with no rationale for doing so and that is simply unacceptable.”

Recreational anglers are encouraged to come out to the hearing on November 13<sup>th</sup> to show their support for the Freedom to Fish Act.

*The Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) is a national, grassroots political action organization representing individual sport fishermen and the sport fishing industry. The RFA Mission is to safeguard the rights of saltwater anglers, protect marine, boat and tackle industry jobs and ensure the long-term sustainability of U.S. saltwater fisheries. For more information, call 1-888-JOIN-RFA.*