

POLICY Watch

Government Affairs Update

These items cover Government Affairs activities for May and June 2009. For more information on ASA's Government Affairs activities, contact [Gordon Robertson](#), vice president and Government Affairs lead, x237, [Patty Doerr](#), director, Ocean Resource Policy, x244, or [Mike Leonard](#), Policy fellow, x230. Please visit [ASA's Web site](#) for more information.

Commerce Secretary Names 30 to Fishery Management Councils

On June 25, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced the appointment of 30 new and returning members to the eight regional fishery-management councils. The councils, established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, oversee the management of marine fish stocks in their regions. Council members represent diverse interests, including commercial and recreational fisheries, environmental concerns and academia. A complete list of council members may be viewed [here](#).

Oregon Marine Reserves Update

In June, American Sportfishing Association (ASA) Vice President Gordon Robertson and Ocean Resource Policy Director Patty Doerr met with Oregon officials, legislators and angler organizations to discuss the planning of marine reserves off the state's coast. The Oregon legislature recently passed a bill to fund two marine reserves and set a schedule for studying four others. The two reserves are intended as pilot projects, and the initial reserve system is significantly smaller than the one originally proposed. The governor is expected to sign the legislation into law.

National Fish Habitat Conservation Act Update

On June 16, the House Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife held a hearing to discuss

the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act (NFHCA), which was Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI) introduced in May. In the Senate, Sens. Joe Lieberman (I-CT), Christopher "Kit" Bond (R-MO), Bob Casey (D-PA), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Mike Crapo (R-ID), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) introduced the same act. ASA has been working with the NFHCA legislative team to contact members of Congress to advocate for support of the bill and to seek additional sponsorship. The foundation for the NFHCA is the [National Fish Habitat Action Plan](#) (NFHAP). ASA Vice President Gordon Robertson sits on the NFHAP Board of Directors.

President Obama Orders Development of New National Ocean Policy

President Obama recently released a Presidential Memorandum that orders the development of a national ocean policy that could lead to marine zoning. The memorandum calls for a new interagency task force, headed by the Council on Environmental Quality, to develop a set of recommendations for a national ocean policy within 90 days. And within 180 days the task force is to develop recommendations for a system of coastal and marine spatial planning.

ASA Comments on Oceans-21 Bill

ASA recently submitted comments to the House Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife

outlining its concerns with the Oceans Conservation, Education, and National Strategy for the 21st Century Act (Oceans-21). ASA's primary concern is the establishment of additional layers of bureaucracy and government oversight the bill would create and its potential impacts on the recreational fishing community and the regional fishery management councils' regulatory authority.

California Marine Life Protection Act Implementation Update

ASA and the Partnership for Sustainable Oceans (PSO), which represents recreational fishing and boating interests, scored a win in the Marine Life Protection Act planning process. The PSO, as well as other organizations and individual anglers, voiced its objections to a decision allowing Proposal C, the most extreme marine protected areas closure plan for Southern California, to move forward as one of seven alternatives despite being defeated during the Regional Stakeholder Group meeting held May 19-21, in Santa Ana, Calif. Later in May the Blue Ribbon Task Force voted to reverse the decision, eliminating Proposal C from further formal review. The PSO is still calling for a slow down of the implementation process in order for the science to catch up to the process, which has no defined timeline under the Marine Life Protection Act.

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North Central Coast MLPA Implementation—Take Action Now

The Partnership for Sustainable Ocean's (PSO) Proposal 2-XA remains one of four North Central Coast marine protected area alternatives before the California Fish and Game Commission (FGC). The FGC held its first round of public comment at its May meeting, with a final vote expected to occur at its August meeting, which will complete Phase II of the Marine Life Protection Act implementation along the North Central Coast. To send a letter to the FGC in support of Proposal 2XA, the alternative ASA and the PSO support, please go to www.keepamericafishing.org/california.

California Marine Life Protection Act Funding Update

On June 22, ASA and the Partnership for Sustainable Oceans (PSO) asked Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to [suspend the Marine Life Protection Act \(MLPA\) planning and implementation process](#) citing a lack of financial and scientific resources to support the designation of marine protected areas. ASA staff and PSO representatives also expressed these concerns for the South Coast planning process during the May Fish and Game Commission meeting. California's State Legislative Joint Budget Committee recently voted to pull all general fund support—\$4.8 million—for the MLPA, but it also voted to backfill that funding with state bond funds used by the Ocean Protection Council. Questions remain regarding the process and legality of such a move.

Two More Groups Join the PSO

The Partnership for Sustainable Oceans (PSO) is pleased to announce that the [Watermen's Alliance](#) and contributing members of the [Avalon Tuna Club](#) have joined the PSO, the coalition of recreational

fishing and boating organizations formed to advocate for their interests in the California Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) implementation process. The PSO looks forward to working with these two groups as the MLPA process in Southern California moves forward.

Wallop-Breaux Reauthorization Update

The Angling and Boating Alliance continues to promote reauthorization of the [Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund](#) (Wallop-Breaux). The alliance has been drafting bill text and continuing outreach to members of Congress. The alliance consists of ASA, the [Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation](#), the [National Marine Manufacturers Association](#), the [National Association of State Boating Law Administrators](#), the [Marine Retailers Association of America](#), the [Association of Marina Industries](#), the [American Recreation Coalition](#), the [National Boating Federation](#), the [Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies](#), [BoatUS](#), [Trout Unlimited](#), the [Coastal Conservation Association](#) and [Bass Anglers Sportsman Society](#). The U.S. [Coast Guard](#) and the U.S. [Fish and Wildlife Service](#) have advisory roles within the alliance.

Fisheries Groups Hold Federal Briefing Meeting

In May, ASA hosted a FishNet meeting during which federal agencies gave briefings on their fiscal year 2010 fisheries program budgets. Representatives from the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Marine Fisheries Service, Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Geological Survey made presentations. The meeting helped FishNet members develop recommendations for the 111th Congress. FishNet is composed of organizations and agencies that have an interest in fishery conservation.

California Striped Bass Game Fish Status Upheld

Provisions were struck from a bill that would have removed game fish status for striped bass in California. The bill, as passed, only requires a literature review of the impact of predation by non-native and native species upon Central Valley Chinook salmon and delta smelt in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and San Francisco Bay. Striped bass, while not native to California, have been important to the California sportfishing community for more than 100 years. No historic or current data exists to suggest that striped bass predation has a significant effect on native smelt and salmon populations. In April, ASA sent a letter to the California State Assembly Committee on Water, Parks and Wildlife urging it to vote against the original bill.

New York and Connecticut Pass Laws to Create Saltwater Fishing Licenses

Connecticut recently passed a bill that will require all anglers to purchase a fishing license to fish in the state's marine waters. The bill is awaiting the governor's signature before passing into law. Built into the legislation is reciprocity with adjoining states, including New York. New York's saltwater fishing license becomes effective Oct. 1, 2009, and will recognize Connecticut's marine fishing licenses, but only within the borders of the Long Island Sound. The annual license fee for each state will be \$10 for residents and \$15 for non-residents. The license will help increase funding for fisheries conservation and provide valuable recreational saltwater angler data.

Vermont and Illinois Lead Bill Updates

A bill to repeal restrictions on fishing with lead sinkers in streams and rivers in Vermont will not be heard in the current legislative session. In 2004, Vermont passed H. 516 that banned selling lead sinkers in the state as well as using them in any state waters. Although the

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intended goal was to protect loons from ingesting discarded lead sinkers, loons do not live in moving water. The bill to repeal the ban will be reintroduced in the next state session. In Illinois, provisions were struck from a bill that would have prohibited the sale and use of lead sinkers and jigs in state waters. The amended bill passed, but only as an educational bill that allows the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to institute an educational program to discourage the use of lead sinkers and jigs.

More Atlantic Salmon to Receive ESA Protections

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have extended Endangered Species Act protection to Atlantic salmon found in the Penobscot, Kennebec and Androscoggin Rivers and their tributaries, adding to the endangered Gulf of Maine population first listed in 2000. The decision is part of ongoing Atlantic salmon recovery efforts. The protections will include restrictions on development within 30 meters of the rivers and require hydroelectric utilities to install devices to protect migrating fish passing through dams. Hundreds of thousands of Atlantic salmon used to populate most major rivers along the

Northeastern United States but now return in small numbers only to rivers in Maine.

Water Infrastructure Financing Act of 2009

In May, the Water Infrastructure Financing Act of 2009 was introduced to the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works after passing the House of Representatives. This bill will provide \$38.5 billion for construction, manufacturing and engineering programs to improve the nation's water infrastructure, also boosting water quality in the country's lakes, streams and estuaries. The Water Infrastructure Network, of which ASA is a member, advocated passage of this legislation.

ASA Staff Attends Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee Meeting

As a member of the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC), Patty Doerr, ASA Ocean Resource Policy director, attended the MAFAC spring meeting held in Monterey, Calif., in early May. The agenda included briefings on seafood safety and quality, marine spatial planning, fisheries disasters and ocean acidification. The MAFAC is expected to hold its next meeting in November 2009 in the Washington, DC, area.

North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Planning Begins

In May ASA Vice President Gordon Robertson attended the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Steering Committee meeting. The meeting is part of an annual process that determines the theme, sessions and workshops for this 75-year-old conference.

ASA Participates in CSF Events

In May ASA Vice President Gordon Robertson attended the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) Board of Directors dinner and strategic planning meeting. The foundation's state component, the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses, now has 36 state legislative sportsmen's caucuses. Robertson is a CSF board member and officer.

In June, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) held its second breakfast briefing for the 111th Congress. ASA President and CEO Mike Nussman spoke at the event briefing members of Congress, their staff and industry representatives about the reauthorization of the [Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund](#) (Wallop-Breaux) as part of ongoing 2009 Highway Bill discussions. ■