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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2015 Kenai Classic Roundtable Addresses Next 20 Years of Recreational Fishing

Discussion Draws Most Influential Voices in Recreational Fishing Community

Soldotna, Alaska, August 25, 2015 – The 3rd Annual Kenai Classic Roundtable brought together leaders from all segments of the recreational fishing community. The panelists gathered on Wednesday, August 19, at the Soldotna Regional Sports Complex to look at the 20-year future of recreational fishing. They discussed many potential challenges during the two-and-a-half-hour event and ultimately put forward a vision of hope, opportunity and growth for the recreational fishing community.

“The perspective that this roundtable [lends] to where we’re going with sportfishing – not only here in the state of Alaska, but nationwide – is an important one,” said U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, Co-Chair of the U.S. Senate Oceans Caucus. “We know that here within this region this economy booms when fishing is strong . . . it allows us to have the economic base that is meaningful and significant, so that economic benefit is there.”

Sen. Murkowski joined Joe Balash, Chief of Staff for Senator Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, and a panel that focused on a long-term view of recreational fishing and the strategies necessary to ensure continued growth of the sport. Together, the panel put forward a vision of the future in which recreational anglers are given appropriate consideration under the law in line with their cultural, economic, and conservation impacts.

The panel signaled a change in strategy for the growing recreational fishing coalition, one that presents a unified front for communication, advocacy, and lobbying in order to better protect American anglers. Panelists included:

- Pat Murray, President, Coastal Conservation Association
- Bob Hayes, Center for Coastal Conservation Board of Directors and Former CCA® General Counsel
- Mike Leonard, Ocean Resource Policy Director, American Sportfishing Association®
- Geoff Mullins, Chief Operating and Communication Officer, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
- Jeff Gabriel, National Marine Manufacturers Association® Legal Counsel and Recreational Fishing Alliance Board Member
- Kara Moriarty, Executive Director, Alaska Oil and Gas Association and KRSA Board Member

Each panelist drove home the consistent theme of unity for our industry,” said panel moderator Martin Peters, Government Relations Manager, Yamaha Marine Group. “Unity among anglers. Unity among sportsmen. And ultimately, unity among all users of America’s waterways, regardless of how they fish, where they fish, or why they fish.”

Panelists focused on the value of anglers as the economic drivers of the “user pays, public benefits” system of American conservation funding. Through license fees, excise taxes on tackle and boating equipment, and private donations, anglers contribute over \$1.5 billion annually to aquatic habitat restoration projects; a number that far exceeds any other user group. These contributions, in conjunction with the manpower contributions that anglers provide as volunteers on habitat restorations projects, provided a message that resonated with the legislators in attendance.

The panel’s championing of recreational anglers did not come at the expense of any other marine user group. In fact, the panel’s discussion culminated in

Peters' closing remarks, as he called for various stakeholders to come together in pursuit of common benefits.

"If I were offering my advice and counsel to anyone engaged in issues surrounding recreational fisheries, I would advise them to pursue a mutual gains approach to resolving the problem," said Peters, "and I think that we recreational anglers should sit down with commercial anglers, and that would be my hope for the next 20 years."

The recreational fishing community plans to build upon the vision for the future put forward at the 2015 Kenai Classic Roundtable. The panel indicated the coalition's first step would be to pursue passage of a bill in the U.S. Senate that would reauthorize the Magnuson-Stevens Act in a similar nature to the recently passed House version (H.R. 1335). Though passage of a Magnuson-Stevens Reauthorization has proven to be a long journey for the recreational fishing community, the panelists felt confident that MSA reauthorization can be passed in the current Congress.

"There's always that hope for fishermen. 'Hope burns always in the heart of a fisherman,' Zane Grey, the great novelist, wrote. And I truly believe that," said Geoff Mullins, Chief Operating and Communications Officer, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership. "And so I tend to put myself in that very optimistic, hopeful camp when I think about the future of our sport, the future of our industry, and the future of the conservation of our resources. We're doing a lot of great things as a community. We have a clear vision for the future."

To view a video news release about the 2015 Kenai Classic Roundtable on National Recreational Fishing, please visit <http://bit.ly/1EU89bx>. The full-length video of the Roundtable and a transcript are available at <http://www.krsa.com/blog/?p=1013>. Please email info@KRSA.com for more information.

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