



January 12, 2025

The Honorable Pete Stauber
Chair
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
House Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Yassamin Ansari
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources
House Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Stauber and Ranking Member Ansari:

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF), I write in strong support of H.R. 5745, the Marine Fisheries Habitat Protection Act. This bipartisan, science-based legislation provides a timely and practical solution to conserve some of the most productive marine habitats in federal waters while maintaining all existing environmental and decommissioning requirements for offshore energy infrastructure. CSF appreciates the Subcommittee's leadership in advancing policies that benefit recreational and commercial fisheries, recreational diving, coastal communities, and our marine environment.

As detailed in my testimony before the Subcommittee, decades of peer-reviewed science demonstrate that offshore oil and gas platforms on the Outer Continental Shelf function as highly productive artificial reefs. These structures provide critical hard substrate in otherwise soft-bottom environments, supporting robust communities of fish, invertebrates, and corals, including species of conservation concern. Research funded by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and published in leading scientific journals shows that these platforms contribute meaningfully to fisheries production—not merely fish aggregation—and that their removal can result in significant and lasting losses to marine ecosystems.

H.R. 5745 strengthens the existing Rigs-to-Reefs framework by allowing for science-based evaluations of end-of-life platforms and facilitating their conversion to permanent artificial reefs, including reefing in place where appropriate. Importantly, the bill does not absolve platform owners of any responsibility to plug and abandon wells or comply with federal environmental safeguards. Instead, it provides additional flexibility to preserve proven, climate-resilient habitats that would be prohibitively expensive, if not impossible, to replace once removed.

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For anglers, divers, commercial fishermen, coastal economies, and most importantly, our marine resources across the nation, the Marine Fisheries Habitat Protection Act represents a clear win for conservation, access, and sustainable use of marine resources. CSF respectfully urges the Subcommittee to support H.R. 5745 and continue advancing pragmatic, science-driven solutions that ensure these valuable habitats endure for future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris Horton".

Chris Horton
Senior Director, Fisheries Policy

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