

Rep. Jared Huffman Opening Statement

Good afternoon. Thank you all for joining us today.

Welcome to one of our last WOW 101 hearings, on the state of fisheries. Through this 101 series, we've established a baseline of facts for this Subcommittee to move forward and address the many challenges facing our water, oceans, and wildlife.

Today we'll discuss fisheries, an important issue for my district, the U.S., and the world. Healthy and sustainable fisheries are essential to maintain livelihoods, coastal economies, and cultural practices. In the United States alone, fisheries represent a 212 billion dollar industry and provide 1.7 million jobs.

Since the original passage of the Magnuson-Stevens Act in 1976, the state of U.S. fisheries has improved dramatically. The number of overfished stocks and stocks subject to overfishing are both at an all-time low and have been for the past several years. We now have over 40 rebuilt stocks. I hope we can all agree that when implemented correctly, the Magnuson-Stevens Act has been successful in supporting a robust domestic fishing industry.

This is true in my district, where fishermen went through several tough years while groundfish stocks were depleted. The Magnuson-Stevens Act provided the scientific and regulatory framework to bring them back, in addition to hard work and support from commercial and recreational fishermen. We've now rebuilt half of our groundfish species and more are on the way. While we have new challenges along the North Coast, the law provides a strong foundation along with engaged, hard-working communities, and we are all invested in sustaining healthy fisheries over the long term.

This committee intends to maintain the important conservation and management standards that have helped us end overfishing and rebuild a record number of stocks, but I also know that there is room for improvement. I'm interested in learning how we can strengthen Magnuson-Stevens to protect our fishing communities and ensure sustainable fishing for future generations.

For example, fishermen on the water and regional managers in the councils are already struggling with the management implications and challenges of shifting fish stocks due to climate change. On the West coast and particularly in my district, fishermen have been severely

impacted by changing ocean conditions that are resulting in devastating fishery disasters, such as in the Dungeness crab and salmon fisheries. We need to figure out what modifications need to be made to the MSA to address these new emerging issues and to better support impacted communities.

I also know that protecting our commercial fishing communities will require increased accountability, transparency in decision making, and improved data collection, use, and management.

I have started a robust process to meet with stakeholders across all regions and sectors to address fisheries management needs in the 21st Century and look to how we can build on the successes of MSA. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today and welcome input from all our members on what is needed to ensure healthy, sustainable fisheries in a changing ocean.

We will also use today's hearing to explore a wider range of issues facing fisheries today, specifically illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing, also known as "IUU" (*I-U-U*) fishing. The United States is one of the top importers of seafood and over 80 percent of the seafood we eat in this country is imported.

IUU fishing is estimated to represent as much as 15 to 30 percent of annual global catches and generate between 10 to 23 billion dollars per year. Recent reports have also shown that some fisheries are flush with inhumane and forced labor practices - the State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report identified 50 countries that have human trafficking or other human right abuses just within their seafood supply chains. That is outrageous.

We need to explore how we can ensure that seafood products from slave labor and from IUU fishing are not entering our markets. I hope that is something we can all agree on and work together to end.

In addition, numerous studies have shown that when you order seafood at a restaurant, you may not be getting what you think you ordered. One study found that one in three seafood samples were mislabeled nationwide. And since we can't have a hearing on fisheries without mentioning red snapper, I have to note that same study tested 120 samples labeled as red snapper, but results showed that only seven were *actually* red snapper.

Seafood fraud affects everyone – it disadvantages honest, hardworking fishermen, threatens ocean ecosystems, and harms consumers. It is imperative that we strengthen transparency and traceability in the seafood supply chain to combat illegal fishing, seafood fraud, and end forced labor practices.

Around the world, we all depend on healthy fish stocks and thriving coastal economies. We have some good examples to follow, but we also have a lot of work to do to improve the state of fisheries in the U.S. and globally. I look forward to working with our Members to get this important work done.

With that, I want to invite the Ranking Member to say a few remarks, and then we will welcome and introduce our witnesses.