

November 9, 2021

House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Letter to Committee H.R. 4690

Dear House Natural Resources Committee Members,

I'm writing to express my wholehearted support for H.R. 4690 - Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act of 2021. Reauthorizing the Magnus-Stevens Act is the most significant step that this Congress can take to sustain commercial and recreational fishing communities and is long overdue.

I make my living as a full-time saltwater fishing guide. Home is mid-coast Maine but I extend my season by traveling to Massachusetts and North Carolina spring and fall and host clients on fishing expeditions during the winter. Addressing climate change and its impacts on ocean ecosystems, specific fisheries, and coastal communities in LAW may be the most impactful update to the MSA that this bill contains. I see firsthand changes where I fish in both the species I target, the forage fish that attracts them, and the species harvested commercially by my neighbors and dock mates. I'm stunned at how frequently climate change implications and uncertainties are left out of fisheries management decisions, often as a result of limited research and data collection. I hear fisheries scientists repeatedly express concerns that they don't have the information that they need to make best decisions and given the rapid rate of change in ocean ecosystems, this can't continue.

H.R. 4690 would also modernize fisheries science and data collection for recreational sectors. Despite the fact that I "fish" for my income, my activities are categorized under "recreational fishing efforts". Commercial harvesters now provide accurate data on effort, harvest, economic impact but there are huge gaps on the recreational side of the stock assessment and management equation. We too need to be accountable for our catch. The impact that our industry has on coastal economies is meaningful. Our business is directly dependent upon healthy, sustainable fisheries and right now our best available science is too often lacking.

Ecosystem management, improving stakeholder participation, protection of forage species and fish habitat are all significant improvements to MSA that are within reach. Sustaining coastal communities and businesses like mine is possible with sound decision making. I urge you to pass H.R. 4690 as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

Capt. Peter Fallon
Gillies & Fallon Guide Service
President, Maine Association of Charter Captains
Member, American Saltwater Guides Association

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