

November 11, 2021

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Chairman, Water, Oceans and Wildlife Subcommittee
House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cliff Bentz
Ranking Member, Water, Oceans and Wildlife Subcommittee
House Natural Resources Committee
1329 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Huffman and Ranking Member Bentz:

My name is Gregory Fitz. I am a salmon and steelhead angler, fishing writer, and conservationist living in Seattle, Washington. I am writing to express my support for the forward-looking **Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act (H.R. 4690)** and the legislative effort to update the foundational **Magnuson Stevens Act (MSA)** to continue protecting our critical ocean fisheries and habitat, and the coastal communities that depend on them.

Many aspects of this legislation will help ensure and recover America's sustainable fisheries, but I'm particularly pleased to see how H.R. 4690 directly addresses the growing impacts of the changing climate and closes loopholes concerning bycatch.

Salmon and steelhead are born in freshwater river systems and soon migrate to the ocean for a few years of feeding and growth before returning to their home watersheds to spawn. They are coldwater species and the warming North Pacific and ocean acidification are already having profound consequences for the food web they depend upon as juveniles and adults. In 2021, steelhead have experienced some of their worst run counts ever recorded and much of these recent losses are the result of poor ocean survival during recent years of abnormally high temperatures. Salmon are the keystone species of the Pacific and Inland Northwest ecosystems and have sustained Indigenous communities since time immemorial. They are a crucial foundation of the Northwest's culture and economy and are targeted extensively by offshore, marine, and terminal commercial and recreational fisheries from California to Alaska.

Importantly, H.R. 4690 will expand research and allow fishery managers up and down the coast to effectively incorporate rapidly evolving climate science and data into fishery planning in ways that will allow the communities depending on salmon to adapt and responsibly continue to fish into the future. It is a critical, proactive step for our fisheries.

I am encouraged by the increased protections within H.R. 4690 for fish habitat and forage fish species, but I am especially happy to see the new provisions designed to report, limit, and prevent bycatch. These losses needlessly degrade functioning ocean ecosystems, prevent fish stocks from recovering, and deeply curtail the potential food and economic value of public fishery resources. For all of the well-documented positive benefits of the MSA, the lack of requirements to meaningfully address bycatch impacts created loopholes that allowed a glaring inconsistency with the law's overarching goals for sustainable fisheries and thriving coastal communities. These loopholes were exploited, and managed, to different extents by separate regional fisheries. Fortunately, H.R. 4690 repairs these gaps and will provide important, consistent tools for managers to vastly improve how bycatch is documented, managed, minimized, and even stopped in some cases. These wise provisions will be a huge benefit to every community who depends upon our shared ocean fisheries.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am grateful for the opportunity to offer my support for the **Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act (H.R. 4690)**.

Gregory Fitz

CC:

Rep. Raul Grijalva, Chairman, House Natural Resources Committee

Rep. Bruce Westerman, Ranking Member, House Natural Resources Committee