



Rhode Island
SALTWATER
ANGLERS
Association



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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 Congressmen Huffman and Bentz:

The Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association (RISAA) represents over 7,500 recreational anglers and 28 affiliate clubs in Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts. We are pleased to take this opportunity to indicate our support for the Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act (HR 4690).

Recreational fishing success is dependent on anglers having access to healthy habitats with an abundance of fish in the water to catch and eat or release. Impacts from climate change are having a big impact on estuaries, fish habitat, and fish. We should consider these changes in how we fish and manage our fisheries.

Anglers are experiencing profound changes from climate impacts of warming water, rising sea level, waste in the commercial fishery and habitat degradation. The fish we catch today are different in type and abundance than what we caught ten years ago.

Warm water fish such as black sea bass, scup and summer flounder have moved into our area in greater abundance. And, cold water fish such as winter flounder and American lobster are now less abundant.

These stock changes in our area have created both challenges and opportunities. The cod fishery south of Cape Cod is a fraction of what is used to be, and nonexistent north of the Cape. Years of a healthy cod stock are gone, no longer in abundance due to climate change and overfishing. Yet the black sea bass shift into our area has created opportunities for anglers.

Shifting stocks have created jurisdictional and allocation challenges. We support the spirit of the bill provision that provides regions with representation on neighboring Councils to help with shifting stock jurisdictional and allocation challenges. However, we suggest taking it a step further as the Fisherman's Fairness Act does, allowing Rhode Island two seats on the Mid-Atlantic Council as RI fishermen land the majority of many of the fish that have shifted to our area due to climate change impacts yet RI currently has no seat on the Council that regulates those species.

Fisheries management needs to be more nimble in the face of climate change. We have to meet the challenge with more precautionary management measures.

The Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act addresses shifting stocks and other impacts to fish due to warming water by providing managers with more needed science so we can get a handle on how fish stocks are changing and ways to use that science throughout the management process.

Protecting forage fish, strengthening fisheries management plans, providing better recreational data are other important features of HR 4690.

We urge the Water, Oceans and Wildlife Subcommittee, the House National Resource Committee and all members of Congress to support the Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act. It is a good step for habitat, fish and fishermen.

Sincerely,



Richard Hittinger, Acting President



Greg Vespe, Executive Director

CC: Rep. Raul Grijalva, Chairman, House Natural Resources Committee and Rep. Bruce Westerman, Ranking Member, House Natural Resources Committee