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House Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
MAIN: (202) 225-6065
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Re: Letter to Committee H.R. 4690

My name is Andrew Braker. I am a 26 year old outdoor recreation enthusiast, environmental filmmaker, and sustainability advocate. Growing up near the Chesapeake Bay I had the privilege to experience spending time in one of the most coveted marine ecosystems in the world. Being born in 1994, I also had the opportunity to experience the boom and bust of the striped bass fishery over the course of my lifetime.

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) has not been reauthorized since 2007; yet, our fisheries have experienced widespread changes since that time. Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act confronts this daunting task by taking aim at topics such as rebuilding overfished stocks, improving recreational data collection, and improving management for forage species.

Forage management is extremely important to me as an angler because I know its direct impact on recreational and commercial fishing opportunities. Forage species must be managed with a firm understanding of the needs of the predatory fish, birds, and marine mammals that depend upon abundant populations of prey items. Since the health of forage fish fisheries has cascading effects, an ecosystem-based approach helps account for a broader range of effects, including trophic interactions among species and the ongoing environmental and climatic shifts within these systems.

This bill would require an assessment of the potential impacts of any new commercial forage fish fisheries. Our forage fisheries are too critical not to require an ecosystem-based model for management. These species represent the fundamental building blocks of the marine food web, and therefore need to be valued as such.

I am extremely encouraged by the foresight of Representatives Jared Huffman (D-CA-02) and Ed Case (D-HI-01) in introducing H.R. 4690, the Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act. This common sense legislation can lead to a more sustainable future for our fisheries— maintaining healthier marine ecosystems, supporting local marine communities, and boosting the blue economy.

Sincerely,
Andrew Braker