



November 30, 2021

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Chairman, House Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Support for the *Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act*, H.R. 4690

Dear Chairman Huffman,

The [Marine Fish Conservation Network](#) (Network) appreciates the opportunity to provide our views on the *Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act*, H.R. 4690, for the record. We applaud the approach taken in developing this legislation by convening a nationwide listening tour seeking input from the many stakeholders with an interest in the sustainable management of our oceans and fisheries. The Network appreciates your leadership to ensure healthy oceans and sustainable, productive fisheries now and into the future.

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act's (MSA) science-based conservation requirements are essential to maintaining and improving the long-term health and productivity of our nation's marine ecosystems, ocean fisheries, and coastal fishing communities. U.S. commercial and recreational fisheries [generate \\$244 billion in sales and support 1.74 million American jobs](#).

Well-managed, abundant fisheries and successful fishing businesses begin with a strong federal law. The U.S. has taken a leadership role in implementing science-based fisheries management with the MSA, and this federal fisheries law is working. We are making steady progress in restoring the health of U.S. fisheries due in great part to Congress' leadership during the last two reauthorizations of the MSA.

However, in some cases, the councils' ability to meet their management goals and objectives has proven challenging. In certain regions, some fish populations have been slow to rebound. Infrequent stock assessments, catch data limitations, and bycatch remain problem areas, affecting the productivity and recovery of fisheries in many regions.

Congress, by moving this legislation forward, has the opportunity to continue to build upon the science and conservation advancements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act secured in previous reauthorizations of the Act. The Network supports those improvements in the *Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act* that promote the long-term health of U.S. fisheries, strengthen the wellbeing of fishing communities, and ensure that our oceans and those who rely on them can successfully meet the emerging challenges of the future.

The bill includes several of the Network's [policy priorities](#), which include supporting fishing communities and working waterfronts, enhancing catch accounting and data management, strengthening bycatch provisions, upholding federal statutes that promote ocean conservation and public participation, improving forage species conservation and management, and assessing and mitigating climate change impacts on fisheries. In particular we would like to commend the measures in H.R. 4690 that:

- Address for the first time the effects of climate change on U.S. ocean fisheries by incorporating climate science and adaptation strategies into management decisions.
- Incorporate language from the *Keep America's Waterfronts Working Act* that provides much needed support for our country's working waterfronts by allocating funding and resources to improve coastal infrastructure and confront the growing threats of climate change.
- Recognize the need for accurate, timely, and verified catch data for all major commercial and recreational fisheries and includes measures to modernize data collection methods and utilize electronic technologies to improve catch accounting, particularly in the recreational sector.

The *Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act* is a comprehensive bill that includes critical advancements to marine policy to ensure the ongoing conservation and restoration of U.S. fisheries and oceans. The Network looks forward to working you and Congress to ensure the final bill supports healthy marine ecosystems, vibrant local economies, sustainably-caught seafood, millions of jobs, and abundant recreational opportunities around the country for generations to come.

Thank you again for your leadership on this matter.



Robert C. Vandermark
Executive Director