

Committee on Natural Resources

Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries Oversight Hearing

“Benefits and Access: The Necessity for Multiple Use of Water Resources”

Responses to Questions for the Record for Martha Guyas, American Sportfishing Association

Questions from Rep. Debbie Dingell for Mrs. Martha Guyas, Southeast Fisheries Policy Director, American Sportfishing Association

1. Ms. Guyas, as I recall, the Morris-Deal report, which articulated a vision for management of recreational fisheries and was endorsed by the American Sportfishing Association, included the need for improved forage fish management as one of its key policy pillars. **Ms. Guyas, how important are forage fish for healthy recreational fisheries?**

Forage fish are critically important for healthy recreational fisheries because they serve as prey for recreationally-important fish species, as well as sea birds and other marine life.

2. Ms. Guyas, last Congress, I introduced the bipartisan Forage Fish Conservation Act, which was passed out of this committee as part of the broader MSA reauthorization. The Forage Fish Conservation Act would implement science-based management approaches to ensure we have enough forage fish in our oceans for a healthy marine ecosystem. It also earned the support of ten Republicans and eleven Democrats as cosponsors, underscoring the broad consensus for strengthened fisheries management. **Ms. Guyas, but left unaddressed, how will declining forage fish stocks affect the overall marine environment?**

Declining forage fish stocks would mean less food available at low trophic levels for recreationally- and commercial-important predator fish, birds, whales, and other valuable components of the ecosystem, which could in turn have consequences throughout the overall marine environment. If we want to improve the economic productivity of our fisheries resources, managers need to leave enough prey in the water to be available for valuable predators. The Forage Fish Conservation Act would help ensure a healthy food base that benefits overall marine environment, fishing communities, and the economy.

3. Speaking of bipartisan efforts to promote healthy fisheries and help sustain fishery access for anglers, American Sportfishing Association has also supported the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act. **Ms. Guyas, why would RAWA be transformational for wildlife conservation and sportsmen’s access to water resources?**

A past ASA employee used to joke that RAWA should have been called the “Recovering America’s FISH AND Wildlife Act.” In Florida’s last State Wildlife Action Plan, the state identified 690 species that are in greatest conservation need, many of these are aquatic animals that are in jeopardy of being classified as threatened or endangered. The conservation efforts that RAWA would support not only will help these non-game species avoid becoming threatened or endangered, but provide ancillary benefits to sportfish through overall healthier aquatic ecosystems.