

August 1, 2025

House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Legislative Hearing on Discussion Draft to Amend the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972

Dear Chair Hageman:

I write on behalf of the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) to express support for the need to carefully reform the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (MMPA) through the Discussion Draft introduced by Rep. Nick Begich. NMMA appreciates the Subcommittee's dedication to evaluating this important issue and considering opportunities to improve the implementation of this critical program and ensure federal decisions are supported by an objective consideration of both the best available scientific evidence and the full scope of a decision's potential impacts. I request submission of this letter to the hearing record to share the recreational marine industry's perspective.

Congress enacted the MMPA in the 1970s with the goal of conserving and protecting marine mammals. Since its enactment, there have only been slight adjustments to the law, but none of these changes have accounted for significant developments over the last half-century, including the increased ability to access our treasured marine resources and technological advancements on the vessels used to access these spaces. NMMA and its members fully support the MMPA and the objectives of conservation and species protection. Too often, however, federal agencies responsible for managing our public resources and implementing the MMPA have failed to give a balanced review of the scientific data and have made decisions without consideration of economic harm. Given several recent ill-conceived proposed restrictions and rules that would have significantly harmed public access to the ocean, a review of original congressional intent and commonsense reforms to this 50-year-old law are welcome and supported by small businesses and coastal economies.

The proposed Discussion Draft aims to make long-overdue reforms – modernizing the MMPA to ensure balanced, science-based, and economically considerate implementation in line with today's environmental, technological, and economic realities. The amendments would reduce regulatory uncertainty, ensure more effective implementation, and address other important issues including clearly defining key terms, eliminating subjective interpretations, and mandating more inclusive and scientifically balanced rulemaking processes.

The Discussion Draft also provides much-needed improvements to the law, such as mandating consideration of the direct impacts a proposed regulation would have on industries, like recreational boating, by considering “the potential economic, navigational, safety, and operational impacts of the regulation on affected industries.”

NMMA appreciates the Subcommittee for its ongoing commitment to address this critical issue that impacts all Americans and their communities. We welcome the opportunity to work together to ensure that the intent of the statute is clarified and implemented in a manner that both protects sensitive species and supports public access and economic activity.

Sincerely,

Robyn Boerstling
Chief Advocacy Officer and Senior Vice President of Government Affairs