



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES
CHAIRMAN BRUCE WESTERMAN

To: Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries Republican Members
From: Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries Staff: Richie O’Connell (richie@mail.house.gov), Doug Levine (doug.levine@mail.house.gov), Kirby Struhar (kirby.struhar@mail.house.gov), and Jackson Renfro (jackson.renfro@mail.house.gov); x5-8331
Date: Monday, November 17, 2025
Subject: Legislative Hearing on 4 Bills

The Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries will hold a legislative hearing on four bills: H.R. 338 (Rep. Costa), “*Every Drop Counts Act*”; H.R. 1514 (Rep. Ezell), “*Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission Act of 2025*”; H.R. 3756 (Rep. Crenshaw), “*Fighting Foreign Illegal Seafood Harvests Act of 2025*” or “*FISH Act of 2025*”; and H.R. 5699 (Rep. Rutherford), “*Fisheries Data Modernization and Accuracy Act of 2025*” on **Wednesday, November 19, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. in room 1324 Longworth House Office Building.**

Member offices are requested to notify Hannah Garrett (hannah.garrett@mail.house.gov) by 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 18, 2025, if their Member intends to participate in the hearing.

I. KEY MESSAGES

- H.R. 1514 would create a formal structure through which states, tribes, and federal agencies in the Mississippi River Basin can cooperatively develop, manage, and conserve the basin’s interjurisdictional fishery resources.
- H.R. 3756 would combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing by blacklisting offending vessels from U.S. ports and waters, bolstering the Coast Guard’s enforcement capabilities and partnerships, and advancing international and bilateral negotiations to achieve enforceable agreements and treaties.
- H.R. 5699 would reform the Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP) by incorporating state-led data collection, leveraging partnership with the National Academies, and encouraging transparency in the science used to inform fisheries management decisions.
- H.R. 338 expands eligibility requirements and extends funding for the Bureau of Reclamation’s Small Storage Program to support additional surface water and groundwater storage projects.

II. WITNESSES

Panel I (Members of Congress)

- *To Be Announced*

Panel II (Outside Experts)

- **Mr. Ben Batten**, Chairman, Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association [*H.R. 1514*]
- **Mr. Justin Conrad**, Chair-Elect, National Fisheries Institute [*H.R. 3756*]
- **Dr. Christopher “CJ” Sweetman**, Federal Fisheries Section Leader, Division of Marine Fisheries, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission [*H.R. 5699*]
- **Ms. Christine Compton**, Director of Strategic Communications and Advocacy/Deputy General Counsel, Irvine Ranch Water District [*H.R. 338*] (*Minority witness*)

III. BACKGROUND

H.R. 338 (Rep. Costa), “Every Drop Counts Act”

The Bureau of Reclamation’s (Reclamation) Small Storage Program (program) was authorized by sections 40901(1) and 40903 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) to enhance water supply reliability in the western United States by supporting the development of small surface water and groundwater projects and related conveyance.¹ The IIJA authorized \$100 million for fiscal year (FY) 2022 through FY 2026, of which approximately \$43.5 million remains available from FYs 2025 and 2026.²

Section 40903 of the IIJA outlines identical eligibility criteria for both surface water and groundwater projects, capping each at 30,000 acre-feet.³ Many groundwater projects have the capacity to recharge more than 30,000 acre-feet under certain circumstances, but are excluded under current law.⁴

H.R. 338, introduced by Representative Jim Costa (D-CA-21), would expand the program eligibility to include groundwater facilities capable of recharging up to 150,000 acre-feet annually.⁵ Moreover, the bill extends Reclamation’s authority to administer the grant program for an additional five years.⁶

¹ U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. “Small Storage Program.” *Bureau of Reclamation*, U.S. Department of the Interior, <https://www.usbr.gov/smallstorage/>. Accessed 23 Oct. 2025.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ Costa, Jim. “Costa, Valley Leaders Introduce Bipartisan Bills to Boost Groundwater Recharge Efforts in the San Joaquin Valley.” *Press Releases*, U.S. House of Representatives, 16 Jan. 2025, <https://costa.house.gov/media/press-releases/costa-valley-leaders-introduce-bipartisan-bills-boost-groundwater-recharge>.

⁵ United States, Congress. *H.R. 338 – Every Drop Counts Act*. 119th Cong., 1st sess., Introduced January 13 2025, Congress.gov, <https://crdmin-clerk.house.gov/repository/II/II13/20251119/118654/BILLS-119HR338ih.pdf>.

⁶ *Id.* at 3.

H.R. 1514 (Rep. Ezell), “Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission Act of 2025”

The Mississippi River Basin is the fourth-largest watershed in the world and the largest in the United States.⁷ It drains all or part of 31 states, supports over 260 species of fish, and falls under the jurisdiction of multiple governmental agencies.⁸

H.R. 1514, sponsored by Representative Mike Ezell (R-MS-04), would establish a Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission under the Department of the Interior to coordinate interjurisdictional fishery resources in the basin.⁹ Participation in the Commission would be voluntary, its recommendations nonbinding, and its membership drawn from a broad range of entities involved in the basin to ensure wide representation.¹⁰ Specifically, delegates could include representatives from each of the 31 basin states, any federally recognized Tribal government within the basin, and federal agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Tennessee Valley Authority.¹¹

When convened, the Commission’s duties would include developing and streamlining fisheries management plans across the river system’s six sub-basins, advising management agencies, promoting best scientific practices, and controlling aquatic invasive species such as invasive carp.¹² In addition to issuing recommendations, the Commission would administer both competitive grants to non-governmental organizations, universities, and research institutions and non-competitive formula grants to the states for projects aligned with its goals, giving priority to those that provide at least a 10% non-federal match.¹³ Furthermore, the Commission would submit an annual report to Congress summarizing its activities from the previous year.¹⁴

H.R. 1514 authorizes \$1 million for the Commission’s initial setup in FY 2026; \$30 million and \$50 million annually for FY 2027 through FY 2029 and FY 2030 through FY 2032, respectively, to carry out the Commission’s management and grant programs; and \$500,000 annually for FY 2026 through FY 2032 for Department of the Interior administrative costs.¹⁵

⁷ Mississippi River Basin Fisheries Commission. “About the MS River Basin Fisheries Commission Act.” *MRBFCommission*, n.d., <https://mrbfcommission.com/about-the-ms-river-basin-fisheries-commission-act/>.

⁸ U.S. National Park Service. “Mississippi River Facts.” *Mississippi National River & Recreation Area*, February 15 2025 (last updated), <https://www.nps.gov/miss/riverfacts.htm>.

⁹ Mississippi River Basin Fisheries Commission. “About the MS River Basin Fisheries Commission Act.” *MRBFCommission*, n.d., <https://mrbfcommission.com/about-the-ms-river-basin-fisheries-commission-act/>.

¹⁰ United States, Congress. *H.R. 1514 – Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission Act of 2025*. 119th Cong., 1st sess., Introduced Feb. 24 2025, Congress.gov, <https://cradmin-clerk.house.gov/repository/II/II13/20251119/118654/BILLS-119HR1514ih.pdf>.

¹¹ *Id.* at 6.

¹² *Id.* at 10.

¹³ *Id.* at 13.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 16.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 17.

H.R. 3756 (Rep. Crenshaw), “Fighting Foreign Illegal Seafood Harvests Act of 2025” or “FISH Act of 2025”

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing undermines American seafood competitiveness, depletes fish populations, and is often linked to forced labor.¹⁶ IUU fishing can include operating without authorization, ignoring catch limits, fishing in closed areas, targeting protected species, and using prohibited fishing gear.¹⁷ In 2019 alone, IUU fishing accounted for more than \$2 billion, or 11 percent, of U.S. seafood imports, depriving our economy of significant revenue and stealing tens of thousands of American jobs.¹⁸ IUU fishing runs counter to the United States’ gold standard for fisheries management under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA).

In previous years, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has relied on the Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP) to combat IUU fishing.¹⁹ However, in 2021, NOAA published a report on the implementation of this program, noting that “SIMP does not prevent or stop IUU fish and fish products from entering U.S. commerce.”²⁰

H.R. 3756, introduced by Representative Dan Crenshaw (R-TX-02), seeks to combat IUU fishing where it occurs, protecting the U.S. fishing industry from the harmful effects of these practices and ensuring the sustainability of seafood supply chains. First, it establishes the policy of the United States “to continue the broad effort across the Federal Government to counter IUU fishing,”²¹ and to “prioritize efforts to prevent IUU fishing at its sources.”²² To advance this policy, the legislation would direct the Secretary of Commerce, through NOAA, to establish a black list of foreign vessels suspected of engaging in IUU fishing.²³ Foreign vessels to be added are those that are listed as an IUU vessel by an international fishery management organization; operate in a way that is inconsistent with those international organizations; fish within the United States exclusive economic zone without a permit under the MSA; or provide services to vessels on an IUU list, among other criteria.²⁴ Once listed, these vessels would be indefinitely barred from entering U.S. ports, and their cargo would be subject to confiscation.²⁵ The bill would also require the Department of the Treasury to impose sanctions on offending vessels.²⁶

¹⁶ “Understanding Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing,” NOAA Fisheries, <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/insight/understanding-illegal-unreported-and-unregulated-fishing>. Accessed 5 Nov. 2025.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ United States International Trade Commission. “Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Accounts for More than \$2 Billion of U.S. Seafood Imports, Reports USITC.” *USITC News Release 21-040*, 18 Mar. 2021, https://www.usitc.gov/press_room/news_release/2021/er031811740.htm.

¹⁹ Fisheries, NOAA. “Seafood Import Monitoring Program | NOAA Fisheries.” *NOAA*, 29 Nov. 2023, www.fisheries.noaa.gov/international/international-affairs/seafood-import-monitoring-program.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ U.S. Congress, *H.R. 3756: FISH Act of 2025*, 119th Cong., 1st sess., introduced 06 Jun. 2025, <https://crdadmin-clerk.house.gov/repository/II/II13/20251119/118654/BILLS-119HR3756ih.pdf>. Accessed 5 Nov. 2025.

²² *Id.* Page 4.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.* Pages 5-7.

²⁵ *Id.* Page 12.

²⁶ *Id.* Page 17.

In addition to targeting vessels, this legislation would strengthen international partnerships and enhance at-sea enforcement capabilities. It would encourage the federal government to negotiate agreements and treaties with partner nations to address IUU fishing²⁷ and direct the Coast Guard to increase its inspection of foreign vessels suspected of IUU activity.²⁸ The bill would also require studies to assess the effectiveness of new technologies in combating IUU fishing²⁹ and to analyze the complexities of the seafood trade relationship between Russia and China.³⁰ Furthermore, it would direct NOAA to issue a Report to Congress on the economic impacts of IUU fishing.³¹

H.R. 3756 would authorize \$20 million annually for fiscal years 2025 through 2030 for NOAA to create and maintain its vessel blacklist.³² Additionally, it would authorize \$4 million for NOAA to develop its economic impact report.³³

Companion legislation, S. 688, has been introduced in the U.S. Senate by Senator Dan Sullivan (R-AK). It was favorably reported by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, with an amendment on April 30, 2025.

H.R. 5699 (Rep. Rutherford), “Fisheries Data Modernization and Accuracy Act of 2025”

Recreational fishing is an essential feature of American life and is enjoyed by millions around the United States. A recent study found that 57.7 million Americans participated in recreational fishing in 2023.³⁴ This total, the largest participation ever recorded for a single year, includes 4.2 million new participants, 13 million youths, and 21.3 million women.³⁵ In addition to bringing joy to millions of Americans, recreational fishing also contributes significantly to the national economy. The Bureau of Economic Analysis found that outdoor recreation activities, including fishing, accounted for 2.3 percent of the overall gross domestic product in 2023, or nearly \$640 billion.³⁶

For recreational anglers, access to our nation’s fisheries resources depends on the most up-to-date data that inform management decisions in accordance with the MSA. In recent years, many recreational fishing interests have expressed concerns that NOAA has relied on flawed, outdated data to make management decisions. At the center of this issue has been MRIP,³⁷ administered by NMFS. MRIP is the data program that seeks to estimate total recreational catch to inform

²⁷ *Id.* at 23.

²⁸ *Id.* at 25.

²⁹ *Id.* at 32.

³⁰ *Id.* at 33.

³¹ *Id.* at 34.

³² *Id.* at 17.

³³ *Id.* at 34.

³⁴ “2024 Special Report on Fishing - ASA.” *ASA*, 12 Aug. 2024, asafishing.org/reports/2024-special-report-on-fishing/#iLightbox.

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ “Outdoor Recreation | U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA).” *Bea.gov*, 2017, www.bea.gov/data/special-topics/outdoor-recreation.

³⁷ “Modernizing NOAA and Using Best Available Science.” *House Committee on Natural Resources*, 27 June 2024, naturalresources.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=416219.

management for recreational fisheries.³⁸ In 2023, the Office of Science and Technology within NMFS published a report titled “Evaluating Measurement Error in the MRIP Fishing Effort Survey,”³⁹ which found that the MRIP model’s “current design is likely overestimating fishing effort.”⁴⁰ The study further stated that such overestimation would occur because respondents are more likely to over-report fishing activity than to under-report or forget activities.⁴¹ This ultimately leads to the early closure of fisheries, shorter seasons, and ultimately a lack of access to our nation’s fishery resources. A study conducted in 2024 reached a similar conclusion in supporting “the hypothesis that the current [fishing effort survey] design...could lead to overestimation of fishing effort.”⁴²

The inadequacies of the MRIP program have negative consequences, particularly for recreational fisheries in the Gulf of America and the South Atlantic. While progress was made in the Gulf of America to empower states to assume management authority for red snapper in the first Trump administration, challenges persist in the South Atlantic. For example, in 2024 the red snapper fishery in the South Atlantic lasted one day and was seen by stakeholders as “an artifact of NMFS’s Marine Recreational Information Program’s (MRIP) inability to estimate recreational dead discards,”⁴³ which results in flawed management decisions

H.R. 5699 would address this issue by directing the NOAA Administrator to reform the MRIP program to “meet the unique needs of individual regions and States, taking into consideration the needs of State-level programs related to recreational fishing catch and effort surveys...to ensure that such reform does not unnecessarily dilute the effectiveness of such programs.”⁴⁴ The legislation also directs the Administrator to enter into an agreement with the National Academies to consult on recreational fisheries management, especially fisheries with a percent standard error exceeding 30 percent.

Additionally, recognizing the successful track record of Gulf states in the management of the recreational red snapper fishery, the bill also gives states the ability to seek the approval of the Administrator to collect recreational fishing data to be utilized in management decisions, including stock assessments. It requires the Administrator to utilize state-collected data in place of data collected pursuant to MRIP. Along these lines, the bill also directs the NOAA

³⁸ Fisheries, NOAA. “About the Marine Recreational Information Program | NOAA Fisheries.” *NOAA*, 1 Feb. 2024, www.fisheries.noaa.gov/recreational-fishing-data/about-marine-recreational-information-program.

³⁹ *Evaluating Measurement Error in the MRIP Fishing Effort Survey*. NOAA Fisheries Service, Office of Science and Technology. https://naturalresources.house.gov/uploadedfiles/evaluating_measurement_error_in_the_fes_consolidated_final_w_r_eview_2.pdf

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² Fisheries, NOAA. “Fishing Effort Survey Research and Improvements | NOAA Fisheries.” *NOAA*, 17 Jan. 2024, www.fisheries.noaa.gov/recreational-fishing-data/fishing-effort-survey-research-and-improvements.

⁴³ “CSF Testifies on South Atlantic Red Snapper Amendment at Final Public Hearing – Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation.” *CongressionalSportsmen.org*, 2025, congressionalsportsmen.org/news/csf-testifies-on-south-atlantic-red-snapper-amendment-at-final-public-hearing/.

⁴⁴ United States, Congress. *H.R. 569 - Fisheries Data Modernization and Accuracy Act of 2025* 119th Cong., 1st sess., Introduced Oct. 6 2025, Congress.gov., Page 5. <https://cradmin-clerk.house.gov/repository/II/II13/20251119/118654/BILLS-119HR5699ih.pdf>.

Administrator to develop a grant program to encourage states to establish similar data-collection programs.

The bill also amends the MSA to include definitions of “stock assessment” and creates a “stock assessment plan” under the MSA. Given the challenges NOAA has faced in conducting stock assessments, particularly for the recreational sector, establishing more formalized plans and schedules for these activities will promote accountability and improve management outcomes. It also gives the Administrator the authority to enter into competitive contracts with independent entities to “estimate the absolute abundance of stocks of fish included in the Fish Stock Sustainability Index on behalf of the Administrator.”⁴⁵

Broadly, this legislation advances President Trump’s Executive Order 14276, “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness,” which, in part, directed the Secretary of Commerce to “take all appropriate action to modernize data collection and analytical practices that will improve the responsiveness of fisheries management.”⁴⁶ In June 2025, the Committee held an oversight hearing on Executive Order 14276, which highlighted the need for federal-state collaboration to improve the quality of data used to inform fisheries management.

IV. MAJOR PROVISIONS & ANALYSIS

H.R. 338 (Rep. Costa), “Every Drop Counts Act”

- Expands the Bureau of Reclamation’s Small Storage Program requirements to include groundwater facilities capable of recharging up to 150,000 acre-feet annually. Also extends Reclamation’s authority to administer this program for an additional five years.

H.R. 1514 (Rep. Ezell), “Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission Act of 2025”

- Creates a Mississippi River Basin Fishery Commission under the Department of the Interior to improve and fund cooperative management of interjurisdictional fishery resources in the basin.

H.R. 3756 (Rep. Crenshaw), “Fighting Foreign Illegal Seafood Harvests Act of 2025” or “FISH Act of 2025”

- Directs NOAA to create a blacklist of vessels suspected of IUU fishing. Also directs the Department of the Treasury to impose sanctions on such vessels.
- Encourages the federal government to negotiate agreements and treaties with partner nations to address IUU fishing and directs the Coast Guard to increase its inspection of foreign vessels suspected of IUU activity.

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ “Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness.” *The White House*, 17 Apr. 2025, www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/restoring-american-seafood-competitiveness/.

H.R. 5699 (Rep. Rutherford), “Fisheries Data Modernization and Accuracy Act of 2025”

- Directs the NOAA Administrator to reform MRIP, including by consulting with the National Academies, to more effectively manage fisheries with a high degree of uncertainty.
- Seeks to give states a greater role in fisheries management, including by developing their own data collection programs. Also allows the Administrator to work with independent entities to conduct these activities.
- Strengthens management activities under the MSA by adding a definition of “stock assessment” and creating stock assessment plans.

V. COST

A formal cost estimate from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) is not yet available for any of the bills.

Although CBO has not prepared a formal cost estimate for H.R. 3756, CBO estimates enactment of Senate companion legislation, S. 688, would cost \$587 million over the 2026-2030 period. Of this amount, \$489 million in spending relates to the extension of the National Sea Grant College Program added to the bill during Senate committee markup, which is not included in the text of H.R. 3756. CBO also found that the bill would have an insignificant effect on direct spending and revenues over the 2026-2035 period related to the sanctions the bill would authorize.⁴⁷

VI. ADMINISTRATION POSITION

The Trump administration’s position on any of these bills is unknown at this time.

VII. EFFECT ON CURRENT LAW

H.R. 388

H.R. 3756

H.R. 5699

⁴⁷ Congressional Budget Office, *Cost Estimate for S. 688, FISH Act of 2025*, October 15, 2025. <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2025-10/s688.pdf>.