

Written Testimony
NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR OCEANS AND ATMOSPHERE AND DEPUTY
ADMINISTRATOR
ON
H.R. 2406, H.R. 8542, and H.R. 8904

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER, WILDLIFE, AND FISHERIES
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 3, 2026

Chairwoman Hageman, Ranking Member Hoyle, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on H.R. 2406 - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention Improvements Act of 2025, H.R.8542 - Offshore Parity Act of 2026, and H.R. 8904— to amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) to provide for the regulation of fishing in marine national monuments. My name is Dr. Timothy Petty and I am the Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere and Deputy Administrator for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). NOAA acknowledges and appreciates our ongoing work with this Subcommittee.

H.R. 8904 - To amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to provide for the regulation of fishing in marine national monuments

Authority and Oversight of Marine National Monuments

While the Antiquities Act of 1906 grants the President authority to designate monuments on federal lands and waters to protect areas of historic or scientific importance, this Administration is committed to ensuring such designations do not become vehicles for overregulation. Currently, management of the five existing marine national monuments—Papahānaumokuākea, Rose Atoll, Pacific Islands Heritage, and Mariana Trench in the Pacific, and the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts in the Atlantic—is shared between NOAA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In line with the Make America Beautiful Again (MABA) priority to balance stewardship with

economic growth and to advance Executive Order (EO) 14276, *Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness*, we are focused on managing these areas to support multiple uses, including commercial and recreational activities, while preserving our national heritage. As such, this legislation aligns with the Administration's agenda by ensuring that we can continue the proper care and management of our marine national monuments' natural resources and heritage and responsibly manage commercial and recreational fisheries pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA). NOAA supports this legislation.

Unleashing American Fishing in Marine National Monuments

The proposed amendment clarifies that fishing in marine national monuments shall continue to be regulated pursuant to the MSA. We support this provision as it solidifies that the Regional Fishery Management Councils and Secretary maintain their role in the fishery management process.

The MSA is the gold standard for marine fisheries management in U.S. federal waters. Under this Administration, we maintain that fishing should be regulated through the transparent, science-based council process established by the MSA. We have already taken action to rescind regulations in conformity with the Presidential Proclamation *Unleashing American Commercial Fishing in the Atlantic*, which removed the prohibition on commercial fishing within the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument set in place by prior Proclamation pursuant to the Antiquities Act.

Restoring appropriately managed commercial fishing in marine national monuments pursuant to the MSA could enhance domestic seafood production, support fishing communities, and be “consistent with the preservation of the historic landmarks, historic and prehistoric structures, and other objects of historic or scientific interest originally identified in the proclamations establishing the marine national monuments.” The MSA, along with the Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, and other applicable authorities, provides enforceable, adaptive, and science-based mechanisms sufficient to ensure the proper care and management of monument objects.

Moving forward, NOAA will continue to rely on the Regional Fishery Management Councils as critical advisors to ensure that fishing regulations are developed with local expertise and stakeholder input. By cutting red tape and prioritizing the MSA, we ensure our marine monuments support both a healthy environment and a thriving ocean economy.

H.R.8542 - Offshore Parity Act of 2026

The proposed Act would delegate the management of oil, gas, and other energy resources on the expanded submerged land of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama under the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, out to 3 marine leagues (9 nautical miles). The Act would also extend state jurisdiction of Gulf fishery resources under the Magnuson-Stevens Act for Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama out to 3 marine leagues. The states of Texas and Florida have existing jurisdiction over submerged lands and Gulf waters out to 9 nautical miles. This proposed Act would align the state jurisdictions for all Gulf states. It would also align the federal/state

boundary for all fishery resources managed under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Currently, for Gulf reef fish, there is a 9-nautical mile federal/state management boundary that was established by Congress through the 2016 Appropriations Act, then made permanent in the 2017 Appropriations Act. As such, H.R. 8542 would expand the current fishery management authority held by Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. It also would make significant changes to offshore resource development and management. NOAA looks forward to working with the committee further on this legislation.

H.R. 2406 - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention Improvements Act of 2025

The prevention of and response to sexual assault and sexual harassment remain a high priority within NOAA. The provisions introduced in the NOAA Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention Improvements Act of 2025 align with NOAA's ongoing efforts to ensure privacy, and support for survivors while fostering an environment of accountability. NOAA supports the initiatives of this bill, including those that we have already begun to implement.

NOAA is committed to supporting survivors of sexual assault and sexual harassment (or SASH) by prioritizing survivor privacy, ensuring efficient and clear mechanisms exist for support, reporting, and investigation, voluntarily adhering to the Safer Seas Act on our vessels (Title VII of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, Public Law 117-263), and dedicating resources to implementing these initiatives.

NOAA issued its most recent NOAA Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Prevention and Response Policy ([NAO-202-1106A](#)) in 2025, and the Department of Commerce updated its Administrative Order on the process for investigating allegations of harassment in 2024 ([DAO-202-955](#)). The NOAA Administrative Order clearly addresses enhancing reporting and data collection for SASH reports, address anonymity of reporters via restricted and unrestricted reports, detail the restricted reporting process, outline the process by which the Secretary is notified of SASH reports, and include notification of the US Coast Guard when credentialed mariners are involved in SASH reports.

To voluntarily comply with the Safer Seas Act, all NOAA ships have cameras installed in berthing passageways, the Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO) developed a ship's master key protocol, and appropriate signage with information on SASH resources is displayed in accordance with regulations. OMAO also requires all newly commissioned NOAA Corps officers and professional mariners to undergo SASH Training before reporting to their operational assignments.

NOAA continues to be committed to ensuring survivor privacy, which may, in some cases, necessitate limiting the information available to be provided in mandated reports. Vessels owned, operated, or contracted by NOAA are often small and crewed by a small number of personnel, and sharing vessel name, date/time, and location in external reporting may impact survivor privacy.

We also remain committed to efficient collaboration with Federal agency partners. Through processes established in NAO-202-1106A and DAO-202-955, NOAA collaborates with the Office of the Inspector General and the US Coast Guard. We hope that this bill will encourage collaboration across agency investigations of individual reports to reduce impacts to survivors in their reporting and the investigation of those reports.

In Fiscal Year 2026, Congress provided \$3.2M for NOAA's SASH program and directed continued implementation of NOAA's SASH Policy. As part of this effort, NOAA's Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Program, established in 2020, now employs seven full-time Federal employees who provide victim advocacy services as their sole job, and other NOAA employees can undergo training to volunteer as Victim Advocate Liaisons.

We appreciate the Committee's attention to ensuring all individuals working in and around vessels owned, operated, or contracted by NOAA are supported with the resources and mechanisms to ensure a safe work environment. As we continue to prioritize prevention of and response to sexual assault and sexual harassment through the policies and programs mentioned, NOAA gladly supports this bill and welcomes any collaboration with the Committee on future efforts in this area.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this legislation. I look forward to a productive discussion and welcome the Committee's questions on the bills before us today.