



June 25, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker, United States House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Majority Leader, United States House of Representatives
H-107 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Speaker Ryan and Majority Leader McCarthy:

We, the undersigned members of the National Coalition for Fishing Communities, support H.R. 200, the **“Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act”**. We want a Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) that allows for both sustainable fisheries management, and the long-term preservation of our nation’s fishing communities.

We firmly believe that Congress can meet these goals by allowing for more flexibility in management, eliminating arbitrary rebuilding timelines, and adding other reforms that better take into account the complex challenges facing commercial fishermen. The concept of flexibility is supported by the National Marine Fisheries Service and it is time Congress makes it a requirement of MSA.

The following are a few of the concepts contained in H.R. 200 that will create flexibility without compromising conservation:

- 1) Eliminating the 10-year time requirement for rebuilding fisheries and replacing it with a biologically based time frame is essential and allows the Regional Fishery Management Councils (RFMCs) to determine the optimal path and duration for stock rebuilding.
- 2) Modifying requirements for annual catch limits (ACLs) to allow RFMCs to consider ecosystem changes and the needs of fishing communities when establishing ACLs. In light of changing environmental conditions and the role of the environment in fisheries recruitment, these considerations make both scientific and common sense.
- 3) Using the term “depleted” instead of “overfished” throughout the Act is a simple yet very important change that will allow the Secretary to more accurately characterize stock condition not based solely on fishing mortality. The term “overfished” is perceived

negatively and can unfairly implicate the industry for stock conditions resulting from other factors.

4) Maintaining the requirement for a transparent referendum process before any new Catch Share program can be implemented in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico regions will ensure the industry has a role in determining its future.

The American commercial fishing industry – fishermen, processors, suppliers, and their communities – understand that sustainability is the key to long-term success. There is no group that depends on the future of our living marine resources more than those who make their livelihoods from the ocean. From its beginning, the MSA has conserved, rebuilt, and sustained our nation’s marine resources. Our recommendations for changes to the already effective MSA framework will allow us to better protect the people and communities that rely upon healthy and abundant fisheries without undoing the progress that we’ve made to sustain fishery stocks.

This letter does not include support from our Coalition’s commercial fishing groups in the State of Florida, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic regions who have supported H.R. 200 from the very beginning. This is due to a late change to the Manager’s Amendment negatively affecting Section 306 whereby: (1) Gulf State recreational finfish surveys can be more easily certified by the Secretary, facilitating Gulf State takeover of red snapper management in the future, and (2) removal of a key provision requiring the NOAA Southeast Region to specify a 5-year plan to improve stock surveys and assessments, and for inclusion of data in the management process as soon as possible – both of which are vitally important issues in the region. These members include Southeastern Fisheries Association, Florida Keys Commercial Fishing Association, Gulf Coast Seafood Alliance, and Organized Fishermen of Florida. While commercial fishing groups on the East and West coasts continue to support this bill on its overall merits, they share the concerns of our Gulf and South Atlantic members over this late alteration.

Respectfully submitted,

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Inlet Seafood
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Affiliated companies:
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Port Hueneme Ice, LLC.
Cape May Ice, Inc.
Cape Clam, Inc.
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Western Fishboat Owners Association
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Cc:

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader, United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Rob Bishop, Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources

The Honorable Don Young, Chairman Emeritus, House Committee on Natural Resources