



October 31, 2018

## An Open Letter to America's Chefs

Members of the National Coalition for Fishing Communities have long believed that the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) is one of the great success stories in fisheries management. Originally co-sponsored in the House over 40 years ago by Reps. Don Young (R-Alaska) and Gerry Studds (D-Massachusetts), the MSA has become a worldwide model, and is one of the reasons the U.S. has some of the best-managed and most sustainable fish stocks in the world. The bill is named for its Senate champions, Warren Magnuson (D-Washington) and Ted Stevens (R-Alaska).

But we are concerned by a new “nationwide #ChefsForFish campaign targeted at the new 2019 Congress, to launch after the elections in early November,” being organized by the Monterey Bay Aquarium, which the Aquarium calls the “next phase” of its “defense” of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The Monterey Bay Aquarium described this campaign in an October 25 email sent to its “Blue Ribbon Task Force chefs.” The email asked this network of chefs to support the “Portland Pact for Sustainable Seafood” (attached).

On the surface, the Portland Pact matter-of-factly states sound principles:

- “Requiring management decisions be science-based;
- Avoiding overfishing with catch limits and tools that hold everyone accountable for the fish that they remove from the ocean; and
- Ensuring the timely recovery of depleted fish stocks.”

However, in the last Congress, the Monterey Bay Aquarium used similar language to falsely characterize legitimate attempts to pass needed improvements to the MSA as betraying these principles. In fact, these changes would have made the landmark law even better.

The Monterey Bay Aquarium has repeatedly called on Congress to reject efforts, such as H.R. 200, which passed the U.S. House in July, and was sponsored by the now Dean of the House Don Young, that would amend the Act to introduce needed updates for U.S. fisheries management. If the chefs being asked to sign onto the Portland Pact were to talk to our fishermen, they would know how important these reforms are for the health of our nation’s fishing communities.

Any suggestion that the original co-sponsor of the bill would, 40 years later, act to undermine America’s fisheries, is inappropriate. In fact, most of the “fishing groups” that opposed Congressman Young’s bill, are financially supported by environmental activists and their funders.

No legislation, no matter how well designed is perfect or timeless. In fact, Congress has twice made significant revisions to the MSA, first in 1996 with the passage of the Sustainable Fisheries Act and in 2007 with the MSA Reauthorization Act. Like many other valued and successful laws, the Magnuson-Stevens Act is both working well, and in need of updates.

We agree that “management decisions be science-based.” One of the most significant issues with the current MSA is that it requires that fish stocks be rebuilt according to rigid, arbitrary timeframes that have no scientific or biological basis. Bills like H.R. 200, officially the Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act, would instead require that stocks be rebuilt according to an appropriate biological timeframe determined by the regional councils that manage the stocks.

H.R. 200 would also introduce other important measures that would better allow the councils to adapt their management plans to fit changing ecological conditions and the needs of fishing communities, which will become increasingly important as our coastal areas experience the effects of climate change.

American fishermen, like many American chefs, are committed to sustainable fishing and healthy oceans. Our businesses need sustainable, abundant fish stocks for us to make a living, and we all want a thriving resource that we can pass down to the next generation. We would never endorse a law that would threaten the long-term survival of our environment or our industry. That is why we endorse changes to the MSA that would ensure both.

**We ask that any chef who is considering signing onto the Monterey Bay Aquarium letter to Congress first consult the local fishermen who supply them with fresh, quality products to learn how this law affects their communities.**

NCFC members are available to connect chefs with seafood industry leaders, who would be happy to discuss how the MSA can be updated to help both fish and fishermen.

Sincerely,

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