



# Florida Wildlife Federation

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**Manley K Fuller | President**  
P.O. Box 6870, Tallahassee, FL 32314-6870  
2545 Blairstone Pines Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32301

Phone: (850) 656-7113  
Fax: (850) 942-4431

Keeping the Wild in Florida since 1936!

AFFILIATED WITH THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION

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Dear Florida Delegation,

Sportsmen and women founded the Florida Wildlife Federation in the 1930s to protect the Everglades from unsustainable hunting practices. Plume hunters and alligator hunters decimated many bird species and the aforementioned reptiles. We were effective in ending those practices, and over the past eighty years have been involved in nearly every fish and wildlife management decision that affects this state. Today, the majority of our staff, board, affiliates, and membership enjoys the outdoors and continues to participate in fishing and hunting. We share a passion for the outdoors and recognize that without healthy, sustainable fish and wildlife populations that we are diminished, as are our woods and waters. That is why we are asking the Florida delegation to vote against H.R. 200, the so-called "Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act."

Passage of H.R. 200 would lead to rampant overfishing and the depletion of our marine fisheries. It threatens the Magnuson-Stevens Act's strong conservation foundation by weakening many conservation measures including the mandate to use science-based fishing catch limits, while creating large, ambiguous loopholes that would allow fisheries managers to delay rebuilding of overfished species.

The present law works well to protect our coastal communities, which depend upon healthy, abundant fish populations. Since 2001, the number of overfished stocks in U.S. waters has dropped from 81 to only 35 today. Several of those recovered species are Florida icons, including Gulf gag and red grouper. Red snapper also are making a strong comeback on both coasts, thanks to the law. These recovered and recovering fisheries now support commercial and recreational fishing businesses up and down our coasts. Under current law, there is ample access for recreational anglers in terms of always being able to harvest a large number of species.

We urge you all to scrap this bill and come back with one that preserves the integrity of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation & Management Act. We must preserve the core conservation provisions, namely the science-based annual catch limit requirement and the requirement to rebuild stocks in a timely fashion. The law could be improved on by expanding protections to forage fish and habitat.

Sincerely,

Manley Fuller  
President  
Florida Wildlife Federation