



## SUSTAINING AMERICA'S FISHERIES FOR THE FUTURE ACT

Marine Fish Conservation Network's Assessment of H.R. 4690



Fishing boats in Kodiak, AK

On July 26, 2021, House Subcommittee on Water, Oceans, and Wildlife Chairman Jared Huffman (D-CA) and Subcommittee Member Ed Case (D-HI) introduced the [Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act, H.R. 4690](#), to reauthorize the Magnuson-Stevens Act. H.R. 4690 includes many of the Marine Fish Conservation Network's [legislative priorities](#) for improving U.S. fisheries and ocean policy and serves as a [good starting point for reauthorizing the law](#). The Network also sees opportunities for enhancing the bill to better conserve fisheries and ocean ecosystems and support the working waterfronts and coastal communities that depend on them.

The following shows how H.R. 4690 aligns with the Network's legislative priorities for improving the Magnuson-Stevens Act and strengthening ocean policy to ensure healthy and productive fisheries now and in the future. Where pertinent, we have suggested enhancements to the legislation. (For a section-by-section summary of the bill, click [here](#).)

### NETWORK PRIORITY: ASSESSING CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS ON FISHERIES AND ADAPTING FISHERIES MANAGEMENT TO CHANGING OCEANS

#### **H.R. 4690 advancements**

Measures in **Title I: Climate-Ready Fisheries** address Network priorities to incorporate climate science into federal fisheries management and make fisheries more resilient to climate change. This section of the bill requires consideration of climate change in regional fishery management councils' priorities and planning, and creates new approaches to address its impacts on fisheries. The bill provides a framework for reassessing the geographic distribution of catch in fisheries that are shifting into new areas as a result of climate change.

#### **Opportunities to enhance H.R. 4690**

Lawmakers can enhance the bill by clarifying the process for providing public input on climate-related reallocation decisions, and by ensuring that the law will not prescribe or require the reallocation of fish stocks between the commercial, recreational, charter fishing, and subsistence sectors.

*Read more about the Network's policy on climate-ready fisheries [here](#).*

## **NETWORK PRIORITY: SUPPORTING AND STRENGTHENING OUR FISHING COMMUNITIES AND WORKING WATERFRONTS**

### **H.R. 4690 advancements**

**Title II: Supporting Fishing Communities** includes Network priorities to address the economic needs of the fishing industry and fishing communities. This section establishes grant and low interest loan programs to support fishermen and to preserve and update needed waterfront infrastructure, and it also supports the need for community participation in limited access privilege programs.

**Title III: Strengthening Public Process and Transparency** promotes greater community engagement and stakeholder participation in the fisheries management process through expanding the diversity of viewpoints represented on regional fishery management councils, increasing the transparency of councils and the accountability of council members, and enhancing opportunities for remote participation of stakeholders. It expands NOAA sexual harassment and sexual assault prevention policies to include fishery observers and councils' staff.

### **Opportunities to enhance H.R. 4690**

Lawmakers can enhance the bill by clarifying the term “financial interest” at the regional fishery management council level.

*Read more about the Network's policy on strengthening fishing communities and working waterfronts [here](#).*

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## **NETWORK PRIORITY: SUPPORTING AND STRENGTHENING SCIENCE-BASED CATCH ACCOUNTING AND DATA MANAGEMENT**

### **H.R. 4690 advancements**

**Title IV: Modernizing Fisheries Science and Data** includes Network priorities to expand the use of electronic technologies and enhances data management systems in fishery management. It also updates the standards for cooperative research and management and improves fishery data collection. It would require NOAA to develop emergency plans to be used during contingencies that prevent the use of on-board observers and prevent the collection of data needed to perform stock assessments. The bill also includes a much-needed conservation and management fund named after a founding member of the Network, Zeke Grader, who tirelessly advocated for easing the financial burden of conservation measures on fishermen.

### **Opportunities to enhance H.R. 4690**

Lawmakers can strengthen catch accounting and data management measures in the bill by stipulating that all data used in stock assessments and fishery management be subject to scientific standards and statistically valid protocols, whether such data are gathered from trained researchers or from fishermen and other sources. The bill should clarify that existing, scientifically valid data collection methods should be available for use despite the development of other approaches.

*Read more about the Network's policy on improving catch accounting and data management [here](#).*

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## **NETWORK PRIORITY: STRENGTHENING BYCATCH PROVISIONS**

### **H.R. 4690 advancements**

**Title V: Sustaining Fisheries Through Healthy Ecosystems and Improved Management** eliminates an important

loophole in bycatch management that appears in National Standard 9 and elsewhere by deleting the “to the extent practicable” qualifier from directives that bycatch should be minimized. This section also creates a national standardized bycatch reporting program to assess the amount and type of bycatch occurring in each fishery and across fisheries, determine the contribution of bycatch to the total fishing-related mortality of each fishery, and evaluate the effects of bycatch on relevant fisheries, fishing communities, and the ecosystem.

*Read more about the Network’s policy on minimizing bycatch [here](#).*

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## **NETWORK PRIORITY: IMPROVING FORAGE SPECIES CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT**

### **H.R. 4690 advancements**

**Title V: Sustaining Fisheries Through Healthy Ecosystems and Improved Management** addresses Network priorities to clearly define forage fish and assess potential impacts of new commercial forage fish fisheries to the larger marine ecosystems. The bill also includes requirements to consider predator needs in existing fishery management plans.

*Read more about the Network’s policy on forage fish conservation [here](#).*

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## **NETWORK PRIORITY: MAINTAINING AND STRENGTHENING SCIENCE-BASED, CONSERVATION MEASURES IN THE MAGNUSON-STEVENS ACT**

### **H.R. 4690 advancements**

**Title V: Sustaining Fisheries Through Healthy Ecosystems and Improved Management** enhances Magnuson-Stevens’ existing conservation standards to make it more likely that fisheries managers will prevent overfishing and rebuild depleted stocks. The bill requires that regional fishery management councils act immediately to stop overfishing if a stock is approaching an overfished condition and mandates that councils implement new fishery management plans if current plans are not making adequate progress toward rebuilding an overfished stock.

*Read more about why the Magnuson-Stevens Act’s requirement for science-based management is working [here](#).*

The Sustaining America’s Fisheries for the Future Act is a comprehensive bill that includes critical advancements to marine policy to ensure the ongoing conservation and restoration of U.S. fisheries and oceans. The Network will work with Congress to further refine the bill to make sure our fisheries and oceans can meet the challenges of the future and continue to bring significant economic benefits to our nation for generations to come.

For more information on the Marine Fish Conservation Network’s legislative priorities, please visit: [conservefish.org/msa-reauthorization](http://conservefish.org/msa-reauthorization)