



ASSESSMENT OF MAGNUSON-STEVENS-RELATED LEGISLATION

Executive Summary

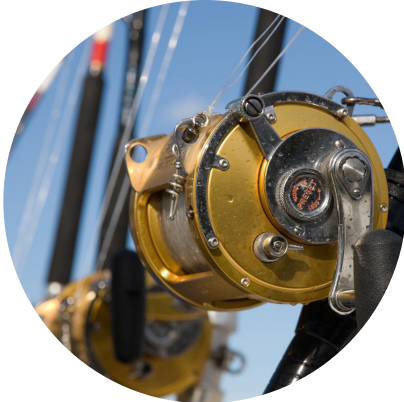


LEGISLATIVE REVIEW:

- **S. 1520** – *Modernizing Recreational Fishing Management Act of 2017*
- **H.R. 200** – *Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act*
- **Rep. Huffman Discussion Draft** – *Strengthening Fishing Communities Through Improving Science, Increasing Flexibility, and Modernizing Fisheries Management Act*
- **S. 2991 (113th Congress)** – *Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2014*

Gulf fishing boat Credit: NOAA

As a voice for commercial and recreational fishing associations, regional and national conservation groups, aquaria, and marine science organizations, the Marine Fish Conservation Network (Network) is putting forth our insights into various pieces of legislation relevant to the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.



Rod and reel

Credit: NOAA

The Network's detailed review of these four Magnuson-Stevens-related bills can be found at <http://bit.ly/MSAbills>

S. 1520

MODERNIZING RECREATIONAL FISHING MANAGEMENT ACT OF 2017

The Network finds some sections problematic and opposes other sections in S. 1520

The Network disagrees with the underlying premise of S. 1520 that recreational fishing is essentially different than commercial fishing and that the Magnuson-Stevens Act was a law intended to manage commercial fisheries. Both recreational and commercial fisheries are activities that remove fish from wild populations and can harm fisheries if they are not adequately controlled. Given the recreational fishery's significant impact on the health of many fish populations, S. 1520 would:

- Inappropriately exempt the recreational sector from the necessary management discipline imposed by annual catch limits and accountability measures.
- Delay the rebuilding of overfished stocks.
- Unreasonably limit fishery managers' ability to develop innovative means to manage commercial fisheries.

H.R. 200

STRENGTHENING FISHING COMMUNITIES AND INCREASING FLEXIBILITY IN FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ACT

The Network finds problematic or opposes most sections in H.R. 200

H.R. 200 threatens to weaken science-based annual catch limits and accountability measures, which are crucial gains made during the last Magnuson-Stevens reauthorization. Many of the provisions of H.R. 200 will hinder federal fisheries managers' ability to rebuild and maintain



Coastal view

Credit: Robert C. Vandermark



Recreational fishing

Credit: John McMurray

sustainable fish stocks and will threaten the scientific integrity of the stock assessment process. H.R. 200 contains provisions that would:

- Inject too much flexibility and ambiguity into the rebuilding timeline for overfished stocks.
- Allow economics to factor into setting catch limits.
- Extend state management into federal waters and exempt the Gulf of Mexico red snapper fishery from accountability when it exceeds catch limits.
- Broaden the categories of data deemed to be “best available science” to include information provided by sources untrained in scientific survey methods and data gathering.

REP. HUFFMAN DISCUSSION DRAFT STRENGTHENING FISHING COMMUNITIES THROUGH IMPROVING SCIENCE, INCREASING FLEXIBILITY, AND MODERNIZING FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ACT *The Network supports most sections in Rep. Huffman’s discussion draft*

The discussion draft represents a realistic effort to address needed improvements to the Magnuson-Stevens Act while maintaining the science-based management provisions that have made the law a success over the past twenty years. The Network strongly supports the discussion draft’s efforts to:

- Improve the data collection and storage process.
- Increase transparency and coordination in the regional fishery management council process.
- Promote ecosystem-based management and the protection of important fish habitat and forage species.

The Network has some concerns about the language that eliminates the 10-year default rebuilding period for overfished stocks, places undue emphasis on the use of alternative management measures in recreational fisheries, and steers limited resources toward unnecessary reviews of MRIP and the development of state recreational data collection programs.

S. 2991 (113TH CONGRESS) MAGNUSON-STEVENS FISHERY CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2014 *The Network has mixed reviews of S. 2991 (113th Congress)*

S. 2991 was a commendable effort to improve upon a few shortcomings of the Magnuson-Stevens Act through greater emphasis on managing for entire marine ecosystems, improving the council appointment process and updating penalties for fisheries law violations.

However, the Network expressed concerns over provisions that:

- Provided for the use of alternate management measures and an alternative to the 10-year default rebuilding period.
- Threatened to dilute the quality of the science used in stock assessments and fishery surveys by including data provided by untrained observers employing untested methodologies.
- Created overly-broad exemptions to the annual catch limit requirement.
- Removed important requirements for the management of red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico.

For a more detailed assessment, please visit: <http://bit.ly/MSAbills>