



MAGNUSON-STEVENS ACT LEGISLATION

Supporting Our Fisheries and Working Waterfronts



Black Sea Bass Caught Off
RI Shores

Credit: Dave Monti

Congress has the opportunity to address issues that are important to fishermen, fishing-dependent communities, and the marine resources on which they rely. The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act is working, and federal policy or legislation that undermines the conservation or science-based management provisions in the law should be opposed. In addition, there are opportunities to further advance the fisheries resource gains made in the last two decades by improving policy in those areas. To that end, the Marine Fish Conservation Network offers the following marine resource policy priorities.

SECURING OUR FISHERIES' FUTURE REQUIRES STRENGTHENING OUR FEDERAL FISHERIES LAW

The Network supports these changes to ocean policy, including the Magnuson-Stevens Act, to conserve our oceans and safeguard fishing opportunities for future generations.

Fisheries Science and Data Management

Mandate stock assessments at regular intervals – based on biological and behavioral characteristics of the species – for directed fisheries managed under a fishery management plan. Science and statistical committees (SSCs) must validate third party data before they can be used to set conservation and management measures. Congress should also increase federal funding for fisheries data collection and assessments.

Working Waterfronts

Require regional fishery management councils to prioritize the health and sustainability of coastal communities and their fishing sectors, sustain and increase the abundance of our nation's fisheries, promote community-based fishing interests in limited access privilege programs (LAPPs), ensure compliance with all community sustainability plans, and require fishing community plans. Congress should also refine and strengthen National Standard 8 to provide for the sustained participation of and protections for community-based fishermen and fishery dependent communities, while maintaining the conservation requirements of the Act.



Next Generation of
Fishermen in Alaska

Credit: ALFA/Alyssa Russell

Bycatch

Refine language in the law to further reduce bycatch, improve monitoring and transparency of bycatch in all fisheries, and to prioritize and promote directed fisheries over bycatch uses. Bycatch reductions should promote ecosystem health, protect historic directed fisheries and provide socioeconomic opportunity for fishery dependent communities.

Forage Fish

Clearly define “forage fish” and require that their fishery management plans maintain a minimum biomass threshold that is above maximum sustainable yield and accounts for their ecological role as prey. The law should prohibit the authorization of new fisheries for unmanaged or unfished forage fish unless or until the regional fishery management council has assessed the relevant scientific information and potential impacts to existing fisheries, fishing communities and the greater marine ecosystem.

Climate Change

Mandate that federal fisheries managers consider the impacts of climate change in the creation of all fishery management plans, as well as include conservation measures to mitigate those impacts. The law should also recognize the growing reality of climate change emergencies and establish new policies and processes for quickly implementing contingency plans to ensure the health and resiliency of fish stocks in the face of these uncontrollable events.

STAYING THE COURSE WITH SCIENCE-BASED MANAGEMENT

Since the Magnuson-Stevens Act has a successful track record for improving the long-term health and viability of our nation’s marine ecosystems and coastal fishing communities, Congress must maintain the Magnuson-Stevens Act’s conservation requirements and strong science-based management. This includes the law’s rebuilding provisions and its requirements for annual catch limits and accountability measures to ensure that overfishing does not occur.

The Network supports fishery management decisions adhering to our bedrock environmental laws – the National Environmental Policy Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the Endangered Species Act. Congress must allow all conservation laws to function as intended, requiring independent examination by both the public and federal agencies that have the expertise needed to make informed decisions.

RESOURCES

The Network’s full list of priorities for improving ocean and fisheries policy, including Magnuson-Stevens reauthorization, can be found at <http://conservefish.org/msa-reauthorization/>

“We have established sustainability as an essential goal for all fisheries, both in the waters off our country and around the world. Healthy fisheries are important to our nutrition, economies, and to the way of life for many people. To assure that a fisheries resource is sustainable requires a collaborative effort between policymakers, scientists, and the public.”

Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK), 2006

For more information, please visit: conservefish.org/msa-reauthorization