

# AMERICAN FISHERIES

October 2016

## THE SITUATION



Thanks to reforms passed by Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support in 1996 and 2006, **U.S. fisheries have become a model of sustainability and responsible, science-based management.** While some fish stocks and the fishermen who historically target them continue to suffer from the impacts of chronic overfishing, the evidence shows that on the whole, fishing is becoming a more stable and profitable enterprise in America.

## WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

The **Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA)** - designed to kick foreign fishing fleets out of U.S. waters - **expired in 2013.** Although Congress continues to fund programs under the Act, it has not made important updates to improve fisheries science, conservation, and management.

**Under House GOP leadership, fisheries policy has shifted from a bipartisan issue with regional divisions to a hyper-partisan one** tied to an extreme anti-conservation agenda.

## WHY SHOULD AMERICANS CARE?

The **MSA ensures that American fisheries will be sustainable in the long term,** giving consumers a growing supply of domestic seafood to choose over foreign product that can be mislabeled, contaminated, unsustainable, or harvested using slave labor.

## WHAT'S THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT?

By **removing too many fish, ocean ecosystems can be thrown out of balance,** damaging sensitive and productive habitats like coral reefs and harming the economy.

## THE FACTS

Since 2011, there's been a **15%↑** in **fisheries sector employment,** and **fisheries-related sales are up 16%** (to \$4.214 billion), according to NOAA

**39** **stocks have been rebuilt** from an overfished condition under MSA since 1996, according to NOAA

## WHAT'S CONGRESS DOING?

Earlier this year, House Republicans pushed through a partisan MSA reauthorization bill that would undermine fisheries conservation and weaken bedrock environmental laws. The Senate has not taken up that bill or moved a bill of its own.



**Democrats have proposed legislation that would reauthorize MSA** while keeping core conservation provisions intact, providing more opportunities to partner with fishermen on research, and taking advantage of new technologies for data collection and monitoring.



The **GOP bill, widely referred to as the Empty Oceans Act, would take us back to the dark ages of fisheries management,** when overfishing and economic depression were the norm. House Republicans have turned MSA reauthorization into an effort to advance their anti-conservation priorities by proposing language that takes the science out of fisheries management and guts conservation measures.



A number of fishing and conservation groups, including **Cape Cod Commercial Fisherman's Alliance, Gulf of Mexico Shareholders Alliance** and **Pew Charitable Trusts,** oppose the GOP "Empty Oceans Act."

## MSA REAUTHORIZATION IS IN LIMBO.

The **House Republican proposal is harmful,** and has died in the Senate two Congresses in a row.

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