

April 28, 2015

Members of the California Congressional Delegation
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear members of the California delegation,

The undersigned organizations & members represent supporters that are deeply invested in the productivity of our ocean. We are concerned that H.R. 1335, a bill currently before the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources, would significantly undermine the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the primary law governing management of U.S. ocean fish.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act is working: 37 fish populations have been rebuilt since 2000. And the number of stocks subject to overfishing has decreased by nearly two thirds in that time period. As a result, we now have healthier populations of Chinook salmon, lingcod, and rockfish here on the Pacific coast. Congress should build upon the foundation of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and reject bills like H.R. 1335 that would roll back the hard work that is helping to restore many of our fisheries.

Specifically, H.R. 1335 would:

1. Create loopholes that jeopardize the rebuilding of depleted fish populations;
2. Undermine the use of science-based annual catch limits for many important fish species;
3. Weaken environmental and public review of fishery management decisions; and
4. Reduce public access to fisheries data, including taxpayer-funded scientific information that is critical for the public to participate in fishery management decisions.

Any of those actions would significantly impact marine resources and the certainty that comes with sustainable management.

While we must protect the gains we have made, we also need to update the law. It has been nearly 40 years since Congress first enacted the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Policy makers now have the opportunity to modernize the law to address 21st century challenges such as habitat damage, shifting fish migration patterns, and increased offshore activities such as drill exploration and coastal dredging.

We urge the California delegation to oppose H.R. 1335 and instead, support amendments to the Magnuson-Stevens Act to shift to a more comprehensive approach to fisheries management that considers the big picture—for example, we need protect important habitat needed to support fish populations, minimize bycatch -- the waste of nontarget marine life, and ensure that any new fisheries are sustainable from the start. Enactment of these measures would help the U.S. to ensure that it remains a world leader in fisheries management so that healthy ocean fish populations will be enjoyed by future generations.

In 2013, coastal counties generated 84 percent of California's \$2.2 trillion GDP and 15 million of California's 17 million jobs. Without sustainable fish populations, we cannot guarantee being able to rely on what has supported our coast for generations. Policy makers must shift to big picture fisheries management to enhance the productivity of our oceans, and reject efforts to undermine the law's conservation measures. Our oceans and people like us depend on it.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

CC:

The Honorable Rob Bishop, Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources

The Honorable Raul Grijalva, Ranking Member, House Committee on Natural Resources

Sincerely,

Mission Blue/Sylvia Earle Alliance

Sylvia Earle, Founder/Environmentalist/Oceanographer/Marine Biologist

San Francisco, CA

Heal the Bay

Dana Murray, Senior Coastal Policy Manager

Santa Monica, CA

Waterkeeper Alliance

Pete Nichols, National Director

Humboldt County, CA

Endangered Habitats League

Dan Silver, Executive Director

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FishWise

Tobias Aguirre, Executive Director

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Earthrace Conservation Organization

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Environmental Action Committee West Marin

Amy Trainer, Executive Director

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O.A.R.S. Foundation
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