



June 22, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan  
Speaker of the House  
U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Democratic Leader of the House  
U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 25151

The Honorable Rob Bishop  
Chairman, House Natural Resources  
Committee  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Raul Grijalva  
Ranking Member, House Natural Resources  
Committee  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan, Democratic Leader Pelosi, Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Grijalva:

On behalf of the Marine Fish Conservation Network, a coalition of commercial and recreational fishing associations, regional and national conservation groups, aquaria, and marine science organizations, I am writing to express our strong opposition to H.R. 200, the “*Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act.*”

The current Magnuson-Stevens law is working. Today, the National Marine Fisheries Service’s (NMFS) *Fish Stock Sustainability Index* shows we are making steady and strong progress in restoring the health of U.S. fisheries. Over two-thirds of overfished stocks have been rebuilt since 1996. From its beginnings in 1976 and through its past two reauthorizations, Congress has consistently amended and strengthened Magnuson-Stevens Act to conserve and sustain U.S. marine fisheries, the people and communities that rely upon them, and our strong national fishing traditions.

By stark contrast, H.R. 200 increases the risk of overfishing by weakening science-based annual catch limits and accountability measures and undermines rebuilding requirements, all of which have been central to the gains made since the last Magnuson-Stevens reauthorization in 2006. Many of the provisions of H.R. 200 will hinder federal fisheries managers’ ability to rebuild and maintain sustainable fish stocks and will threaten the scientific integrity of the stock assessment process.

This legislation is a product of a flawed process that does not honor the long legacy of bipartisanship established by the sponsors of the original act in 1976, the same legacy honored in each of the law’s subsequent reauthorizations. Instead, this bill is a partisan attempt to undermine the conservation gains that have been made in rebuilding this nation’s fish stocks and would undermine American small businesses and communities that are key to our strong coastal economies.

American fisheries are a public resource and need to be managed under consistent laws and policies that can ensure their sustainability. The Magnuson-Stevens Act has a proven track record for improving the long-term health and viability of our nation's marine ecosystems and coastal fishing communities. We should not regress to the days of overfishing, depleted fish stocks and hobbled fishing businesses. We ask that you oppose H.R. 200 and instead support legislation that maintains and improves upon the science-based management that has made our fisheries healthier and more productive over the past decade.

The Marine Fish Conservation Network stands ready to work with Congress on legislation that builds upon the Magnuson-Stevens Act's success and strengthens it to meet the new challenges faced by our oceans, fisheries, fishermen and their communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert C. Vandermark". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "R".

Robert C. Vandermark  
Executive Director