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# H.R. 8862: Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act of 2024

The nation's premier marine fisheries law is the **Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA)**. Representatives Jared Huffman (D-CA-2), James Moylan (R-Guam-At-Large), Ed Case (D-HI-1), and Mary Peltola (D-AK-At-Large) have introduced a bipartisan bill to reauthorize the MSA. The bill **offers a bold and comprehensive update to the law, recommits to sustainable management and readies our fisheries for the impacts of climate change.**

The law was originally passed in 1976 and has been reauthorized twice, most recently in 2006. Previous reauthorizations of the MSA have been bipartisan efforts that strengthened the conservation provisions of the law and improved the sustainability of U.S. fisheries. The introduced bill would continue this legacy of improvements. It would enact much-needed reforms to the law to promote healthy fish stocks, fisheries and fishing communities.

The proposals offered in the bill would enhance our ocean's long-term ability to provide food and support businesses, recreation, culture and thriving coastal communities. The bill seeks to ready fisheries for climate change, support fishing communities, improve representation and accountability for fishery managers, enhance the collection and use of fishery and recreational data, promote healthy fish habitat, reduce bycatch, rebuild fish stocks, and protect forage fish. The bill also increases the amount authorized for funding to implement the MSA.

ISSUE AREA	SOLUTIONS IN THE BILL
<p><b>Readying Fisheries for Climate Change</b></p> <p>Climate change threatens the success of our fishery management system. Action is needed now to build a strong and adaptive management system that will support a healthy ocean, sustainable fishing and resilient fishing communities amidst climate change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporates climate considerations throughout the management process and prioritizes management action on vulnerable stocks. (Title 1)</li> <li>• Ramps up production of climate-relevant science and data, and creates mechanisms to produce climate-ready management decisions. (Secs. 102, 103, 104, 106)</li> <li>• Addresses challenges posed by shifting stocks. (Sec. 105)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Supporting Fishing Communities</b></p> <p>The MSA needs to be strengthened to support fishing communities whose livelihoods depend on healthy oceans and fisheries. Further, as currently written, the law fails to meaningfully consider the importance of subsistence fishing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledges and defines subsistence fishing. (Sec. 201)</li> <li>• Supports preserving and improving working waterfronts. (Sec. 202)</li> <li>• Requires that catch share programs promote social and economic benefits to and participation of fishing communities. (Sec. 204)</li> </ul>

ISSUE AREA	SOLUTIONS IN THE BILL
<b>Improving Accountability of Fishery Managers &amp; Representation in Fishery Management</b>	
<p>Marine fisheries are managed through a complex process involving regional councils and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and more clarity is needed on roles and responsibilities. Further steps should be taken to ensure transparent management and give Tribes and stakeholders a role in the process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expands council composition to include subsistence fishermen and others, moving toward a more balanced representation (Sec. 305), and provides for two Tribal representatives on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. (Sec. 302)</li> <li>• Increases accountability on lobbying, harassment, and conflict of interest for the councils. (Secs. 305, 307)</li> <li>• Promotes efficient enforcement of the law by ensuring NMFS has a duty to act when councils fail to do so. (Sec. 506)</li> </ul>
<b>Enhancing Fisheries Data Collection and Management</b>	
<p>Data on what fishermen catch is essential for managing fisheries and assessing the status of fish stocks, but it is often a challenge to collect. Ensuring the accuracy, timeliness and credibility of fishery data is paramount, and updates are needed to ensure that new technologies and innovations are effectively harnessed and that data from many sources can be appropriately integrated into management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calls for NMFS to report on progress updating its fishery data management systems to improve the collection, intake, use, storage, and access to data from federal and non-federal sources. (Sec. 401)</li> <li>• Facilitates implementation of electronic technologies for monitoring and reporting (EM/ER) in a manner complementary to the use of fisheries observers. (Sec. 402)</li> <li>• Requires NMFS to establish guidelines to improve recreational catch data and to integrate data from multiple sources, and promotes research on innovation. (Sec. 406)</li> </ul>
<b>Promoting Healthy Fish Habitat</b>	
<p>The habitats that fish stocks depend on are increasingly under threat. More must be done to ensure long-term and effective protection for fish habitat.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeks to avoid damage to fish habitats from non-fishing activities. (Sec. 502)</li> <li>• Improves the process by which essential fish habitat (EFH) is designated, reviewed, and managed so it can meet goals for the fishery and the ecosystem. (Sec. 507)</li> </ul>
<b>Reducing Fishery Bycatch</b>	
<p>Bycatch (the unintended catch of non-target fish and other wildlife, often discarded dead or dying) is a serious problem with ecological and economic impacts. Loopholes in the law allow only minimal action, and inconsistent reporting means the full scale of the problem is not well known.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removes loopholes in the law that are preventing meaningful bycatch reductions. (Sec. 503)</li> <li>• Establishes a national bycatch reporting program to improve and standardize bycatch reporting across fisheries. (Sec. 503)</li> <li>• Amends Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program to promote greater adoption of bycatch reduction methods and technologies developed. (Sec. 503)</li> </ul>
<b>Rebuilding Fish Stocks</b>	
<p>There has been a recent increase in the number of stocks in need of rebuilding. At the same time, many plans to rebuild stocks to healthy levels don't succeed and some stocks have faced years of overfishing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures rebuilding plans are effective and stay on track. (Sec. 504)</li> <li>• Builds in more accountability for when rebuilding plans fail and avoids stocks becoming overfished in the first place. (Sec. 504)</li> </ul>
<b>Protecting Forage Fish</b>	
<p>Forage fish are food for many important fish species that support recreational and commercial fisheries. Strengthening precautionary management of forage fish and accounting for their ecosystem role can pay dividends for fisheries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directs the Secretary to define forage fish and requires an assessment of the potential impacts of a new commercial forage fish fishery. (Sec. 508)</li> <li>• Requires consideration of predator needs in existing fishery management plans. (Sec. 508)</li> </ul>