

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 18, 2020

Dear Colleague:

We invite you to review this early discussion draft of our Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) reauthorization bill. This draft includes important and timely updates to the MSA as well as provisions to strengthen communities and support those whose lives and livelihoods depend on healthy oceans and fisheries. With the growing impacts of climate change, difficulties due to the ongoing pandemic, and rapidly evolving needs in fisheries management and science, amending and reauthorizing the MSA remains a top priority.

In an effort to include as many opinions and viewpoints as possible, we held eight listening sessions and covered seven management regions. We heard from 80 different experts and stakeholders, in addition to public comments from dozens of members of the public in person and online. From the very beginning, this has been one of the most deliberative, transparent efforts to reauthorize the MSA, and we intend to continue our course of maximum openness and stakeholder inclusion.

Many of the concerns we heard during the listening tour are addressed in this draft, such as: climate change and shifting stocks; improving science, using new technologies, and modernizing fisheries data systems; supporting fishing communities and addressing the broken disaster relief system, increasing seafood marketing, and encouraging cooperation between industry and managers; making sure we don't move backward on gains made in rebuilding and reducing overfishing; giving more teeth to essential fish habitat consultation; and increasing accountability and transparency in fisheries management. We also incorporated several bipartisan pieces of legislation that have been considered during this Congress as well as thoughtful provisions included in previous MSA legislation.

We are now asking stakeholders to provide constructive commentary. This is the first, and crucial, part of what we hope will be an iterative process of feedback and revision. We look forward to considering all input on the draft to inform our introduction of a bill next year and will be accepting comments on this discussion draft until January 31, 2021.

Lastly, in addition to reaching out to stakeholders, we will be sharing this with our Democrat and Republican colleagues to develop legislation that we hope will garner broad support. Fisheries management has been a historically bipartisan effort, and we hope to restore some of that bipartisanship through this comprehensive and inclusive approach to MSA reauthorization. Our goal with this drafting process is to introduce a bill that makes tangible progress on important issues in fisheries management during the next congress.

Thank you for taking the time to review this early draft. We look forward to hearing from you and to working together to ensure our fisheries, oceans, and coastal communities can thrive well into the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jared Huffman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

JARED HUFFMAN
Chair
Water, Oceans, and Wildlife Subcommittee

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ed Case". The signature is in a bold, blocky, sans-serif style.

ED CASE
Member of Congress