

Sustaining America's Fisheries for the Future Act of 2024

Congressman Jared Huffman (D-CA)

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) is the country's primary statute governing fisheries management in federal waters and has made the United States a world leader in sustainable fisheries. Despite the strengths of the MSA, it was last reauthorized in 2006, and updates are needed to address the many new challenges facing fisheries management and fishing communities in an era of climate change, new technologies, and changing ocean use.

This reauthorization has taken a stakeholder-driven, science-based approach to provide important and timely updates to the MSA. The viewpoints and proposals heard during discussions, eight listening sessions, and public comments have resulted in this comprehensive legislation. In addition, several bipartisan bills are included in whole or in part. Changes were also made to the legislation based on consideration of feedback from over 50 organizations and individuals who sent comments on the discussion draft released in December 2020.

These amendments to the MSA, along with additional provisions to support fishing communities and fisheries management, will ensure the MSA meets the needs of stakeholders now and into the future.

TITLE I. CLIMATE-READY FISHERIES: Requires consideration of climate change in regional fishery management council priorities and planning. Provides new tools and approaches to address shifting stocks and other climate impacts on fisheries management. Tackling climate change is crucial as oceans and fisheries are facing some of the largest impacts due to ocean warming, acidification, and other climate stressors.

TITLE II. SUPPORTING FISHING COMMUNITIES: Creates a working waterfront grant program, increases support for seafood marketing, and ensures fishing communities are included in programs focused on rebuilding and conservation goals. This title also acknowledges the importance of subsistence fishing and how it is defined under the MSA.

TITLE III. STRENGTHENING PUBLIC PROCESS AND TRANSPARENCY: Increases representation of different viewpoints on regional fishery management councils and improves transparency, accountability, and stakeholder participation in fisheries management. This title also expands NOAA's sexual assault and sexual harassment policies to include coverage for fishery observers and Council staff and promotes ethical standards and accountability within Council operations.

TITLE IV. MODERNIZING FISHERIES SCIENCE AND DATA: Expands electronic technologies and data management systems, updates cooperative research and management, and improves data collection and methods. This title also requires NOAA to develop operating plans for emergencies that make it impractical to use human observers and conduct stock assessments, as occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic.

TITLE V. SUSTAINING FISHERIES THROUGH HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS AND IMPROVED MANAGEMENT: Strengthens essential fish habitat consultation, removes loopholes for bycatch management, and conserves forage fish. This title also builds on MSA conservation standards to improve outcomes for overfishing and rebuilding, includes climate change in fishery research priorities, and ensures science-based decision-making for sustainable fisheries management.

TITLE VI. INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT. Clarifies the designation process for conservation commissioners in various international fisheries conventions and amends MSA to specify requirements for annual catch limits and accountability measures for stocks under international agreements.