

DOC HASTINGS, WA  
CHAIRMAN  
DON YOUNG, AK  
LOUIE GOHMERT, TX  
ROB BISHOP, UT  
DOUG LAMBORN, CO  
ROBERT J. WITTMAN, VA  
PAUL C. BROUN, GA  
JOHN FLEMING, LA  
TOM McCLINTOCK, CA  
GLENN THOMPSON, PA  
CYNTHIA LUMMIS, WY  
DAN BENISHEK, MI  
JEFF DUNCAN, SC  
SCOTT R. TIPTON, CO  
PAUL A. GOSAR, AZ  
RAÚL R. LABRADOR, ID  
STEVE SOUTHERLAND II, FL  
BILL FLORES, TX  
ANDY HARRIS, MD  
JON RUNYAN, NJ  
MARK AMODEI, NV  
MARKWAYNE MULLIN, OK  
CHRIS STEWART, UT  
STEVE DAINES, MT  
KEVIN CRAMER, ND  
DOUG LAMALFA, CA

TODD YOUNG  
CHIEF OF STAFF

**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

EDWARD J. MARKEY, MA  
RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER  
PETER A. DEFazio, OR  
ENI F.H. FALEOMAVAEGA, AS  
FRANK PALLONE, JR., NJ  
GRACE F. NAPOLITANO, CA  
RUSH HOLT, NJ  
RAÚL M. GRIJALVA, AZ  
MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO, HI  
JIM COSTA, CA  
GREGORIO KILLI CAMACHO SABLAN, CNMI  
NIKI TSONGAS, MA  
PEDRO R. PIERLUISI, PR  
COLLEEN W. HANABUSA, HI  
TONY CARDENAS, CA  
STEVEN HORSFORD, NV  
JARED HUFFMAN, CA  
RAUL RUIZ, CA  
CAROL SHEA-PORTER, NH  
ALAN LOWENTHAL, CA  
JOE GARCIA, FL  
MATTHEW CARTWRIGHT, PA

JEFFREY DUNCAN  
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

**Opening Statement of**  
**Chairman John Fleming**  
**Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs**  
**On Tuesday, May 21, 2013**

**1334 Longworth House Office Building Subcommittee Oversight Hearing on**  
**Data collection issues in relation to the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery**  
**Conservation and Management Act**

Good morning. Today's hearing is the second in a series we will be holding this Congress on the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. As you may remember, we started this reauthorization process in the last Congress and we will continue to hear testimony on the key aspects of this important law.

In hearings that this Subcommittee held last Congress and so far this year, there has been one continuing message - we need better data.

I think we will all agree that good science is critical to good management decisions. For fishery scientists to make sound recommendations and then for fishery managers to make good management decisions, they must have good data.

This has become even more apparent with the 2009 rewrite of the National Standard #1 Guidelines. This revision resulted in increased levels of buffers when both scientific and management uncertainties were present. This change has highlighted the fact that data collection programs in certain regions of the country have been neglected.

While data is limited in certain regions, we hope today's witnesses will give us some ideas for how this can be turned around.

One of today's witnesses will describe a cooperative research program in which a portion of the fishery quota has been reserved for research purposes and a cooperative program between a university, the states, commercial fishermen, and Federal scientists has yielded significant fishery information without cost to the Federal government. This is the type of program that could be replicated in other areas of the country without increasing Federal spending - something we all need to think more about.

And while cooperative research is nothing new, it certainly has benefits. On the east coast a number of years ago, NOAA was on the verge of closing the monkfish fishery until a cooperative research initiative - that involved agency scientists and commercial fishermen - showed that the fishery was in much better shape than the agency's surveys had indicated. Without those cooperative research surveys, that fishery would likely be closed today.

In addition to using new ideas and new technology, we need to do a better job of prioritizing what funding we do have. The 2006/2007 amendments to the Magnuson-Stevens Act required each Council, along with their Scientific and Statistical Committees, to develop a priority list of the information they needed for management purposes. This five-year research priority list was required to be submitted to the Secretary and the regional science centers. It is unclear whether the science centers have made changes to their funding priorities based on the Councils' suggestions, but it is clear that in some regions, the information necessary for good management has been lacking.

In addition to better information, we continue to hear from our witnesses that there needs to be better transparency in both the collection of data and how that data is used. Involving fishermen in the collection of data - through things like cooperative research - will make the management process better for everyone.

And even in cases where fishery information is available, we have heard that agency scientists are reluctant to incorporate data from outside sources in their stock assessments. This needs to change.

Finally, we need to make sure that data is delivered to fishery managers in a timely manner. Basing management decisions on three- or four-year old information is not likely to produce good management results. And when fishermen do not trust the information that management decisions are being made on or the information does not match what they are seeing on the water, the whole system is undermined. This is especially apparent in the Gulf of Mexico red snapper fishery.

I look forward to hearing the testimony from today's witnesses.