

Statement of Congressman Walter B. Jones (NC-3)
House Committee on Natural Resources
Hearing on Fishing Related Bills
December 1, 2011

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this important hearing. Every fisherman I talk to believes there are major problems with the way our fisheries are managed. Many of those problems are caused by the law which governs federal fisheries management: the Magnuson-Stevens Act. I introduced one of the bills under consideration today, and cosponsored several others, that are designed to correct many of these flaws. We talk a lot about jobs; well that's exactly what these bills are all about. Fishermen in this country are hurting badly. They can't afford to wait years for relief; they need it now. I strongly urge the Committee to move these bills as soon as possible.

My bill – H.R. 2753, The Fishery Management Transparency and Accountability Act, would bring sunlight to the proceedings of federal fisheries managers. The bill would require the federal Regional Fishery Management Councils and the Science and Statistical Committees (SSC) to broadcast their meetings live over the Internet. It would also require the Councils to make transcripts and video/audio recordings of these meetings freely available to the public through their websites for three years after the meetings.

I was alerted to the need for this legislation after hearing from fishermen in my district who wanted to follow the Council's proceedings but could not do so due to the time and expense involved with attending in person. Nor could these fishermen go back and review past Council meetings, because the Council did not make recordings of Council meetings available over the internet.

Under the Magnuson Act, the Regional Councils and SSCs have the power to determine the economic livelihoods of fishermen and their communities. Given the importance of Council and SSC decisions, fishermen ought to be able to easily monitor their proceedings. But times are tough and fishermen don't have the money or the time to travel to council meetings for days at a time several times a year. This bill would fix that problem.

Mr. Chairman, this bill is a common sense measure to add sunlight to the fisheries management process, and I urge the Committee to support it.