



Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Doc Hastings

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Witnesses Applaud Committee Draft Legislation to Renew the Magnuson-Stevens Act

Support Committee Actions to Increase Flexibility in the Law

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, the House Natural Resources Committee held a Full Committee [legislative hearing](#) on "[H.R. Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act](#)". This hearing examined draft legislation, released by House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04) in December of 2013, that would renew and amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to implement common sense reforms that will promote increased flexibility and transparency, improve data collection, create jobs, and give predictability and certainty to the coastal communities that depend on stable fishing activities.

"This draft addresses the requests of fishermen, fishing communities, fishery management Councils, and the recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences that the Act be modified to provide fishery managers with more flexibility. That's the key word: flexibility," [said Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings](#). "The draft provides the Councils with more flexibility in how they rebuild fisheries, and it provides Councils with flexibility in how the Councils set the Annual Catch Limits. But it does not eliminate those requirements. This discussion draft maintains the requirement to stop overfishing, the requirement to rebuild overfished fisheries, and the requirement to set annual catch limits – but it provides more flexibility for better, local decisions to achieve these goals."

Click [here](#) to read Chairman Hastings' full opening statement.

Witnesses at the hearing overwhelmingly supported the draft legislation to renew the Magnuson-Stevens Act and applauded measures in the draft legislation that would add increased flexibility to the law.

[Jeff Deem](#) of the Recreational Fishing Alliance noted that *"Flexibility is a common theme throughout the discussion draft. The Recreational Fishing Alliance strongly supports the use of limited, common sense flexibility in rebuilding fish stocks and with ending overfishing."*

[Richard B Robins, Jr.](#), Chairman, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, backed *"the Committee's efforts to increase flexibility in the Act by addressing one of the most acute*

impediments to the successful management of some U.S. fisheries—the 10-year rebuilding requirement. Giving the councils flexibility to rebuild stocks as quickly as practicable, instead of on a 10-year rebuilding timeline, will allow councils to incorporate biological, ecological, social, and economic considerations more effectively into the development of rebuilding plans.”

[Rick E. Marks](#), of Robertson, Monagle, and Eastaugh, PC, representing commercial fishermen, processing companies, fish houses, and fishing-dependent communities from Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Florida, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island, supported the Committee’s efforts to put more flexibility in the law stating that, *“The title of the ‘Draft’ reflects the interest from around the country in restoring some measure of flexibility to the stock rebuilding requirements without undermining conservation. This theme resonates with many in the fishing industry. Regional Fishery Management Councils unanimously supported adding an element of stock rebuilding flexibility during the 2006 reauthorization and renewed those efforts in 2013-2014.”*

[Vito Giacalone](#), Gloucester, Massachusetts Fisherman and Policy Director of the Northeast Seafood Coalition, highlighted the Committee’s efforts to renew this legislation especially when giving local fisheries managers more control over management decisions. *“These provisions will provide the needed flexibility for the Councils to make common sense management decisions. They will enable the Councils to avoid the kind of prescriptive management responses that have achieved little if anything biologically in our fishery but which have been catastrophic to the economics of our fishery and communities.”*

[Mark Fina Ph.D. J.D.](#), Senior Policy Analyst at United States Seafoods, specifically underscored the provision in the Committee’s draft legislation calling for increased flexibility in fisheries rebuilding. *“The proposed modification of the timeline for rebuilding would remove the current 10 year rebuilding requirement, replacing that requirement with a more flexible timeline. The proposed modification seems to appropriately accommodate the influences of other factors (such as non-fishing environmental effects) on rebuilding the time.”*

[David Krebs](#) from the Gulf Seafood Institute echoed Mr. Fina’s testimony on the importance of flexibility in fisheries rebuilding. *“Timelines for rebuilding fisheries must be relaxed to enhance flexibility for fishery managers. The current MSA requirement for rebuilding overfished fisheries within ten years, with certain exceptions, is an arbitrary time frame and totally unrelated to the biological needs at hand.”*

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