



Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Doc Hastings

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 11, 2013
[Permalink](#)

CONTACT: [Press Office](#)
202-226-9019

Witnesses Call for Increased Flexibility in the Reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the House Natural Resources Committee held its fourth [oversight hearing](#) of the 113th Congress on the “*Reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.*” This hearing examined potential reforms needed to make sure the law benefits both fish and fishermen. The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) is the primary statute governing fishing activities in Federal waters and expires at the end of Fiscal Year 2013.

“Many are concerned that the balance between fish and fishermen has shifted. At a time when fisheries jobs and the economic activity they create are critical to keeping our coastal communities alive, it is important that we ensure the laws and regulations that govern these activities are not unnecessarily rigid,” [said Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings \(WA-04\)](#). “While the 2006/2007 amendments to the Magnuson Stevens Act were well intentioned, some modifications should be considered to give fishery managers additional flexibility to deal with the complexities of fisheries.”

During today’s hearing, Committee Members heard from witnesses about the effects of this law and recommendations for improvements.

[Richard B. Robins](#), Chairman of the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council, shared his concerns that the MSA needs increased flexibility stating that *“it has become apparent that the councils’ need more flexibility to make the decisions that are best for each fishery.”* He added that *“the requirement to rebuild stocks within a fixed 10-year time frame precludes the councils from effectively considering social, economic, and ecological tradeoffs.”*

[Vito Giacalone](#), third generation fisherman from Gloucester, Massachusetts and Policy Director for the Northeast Seafood Coalition, stated that *“the current statute does not work for the Northeast multi-species (groundfish) fishery.”* Giacalone offered his insight on how to improve the MSA: *“We do think Congress should provide additional authority for the Council to implement alternative strategies for achieving the fundamental goals of preventing overfishing and rebuilding overfished stocks... Prudent management would be to allow managers the opportunity to smooth the volatility inherent in individual stock assessments by providing them with statutory tools that can buffer management responses in both directions.”*

[Rod Moore](#), Executive Director of the West Coast Seafood Processors Association, echoed the need for increased flexibility in the MSA saying that *“it is essential that the MSA provide our fisheries with the maximum amount of flexibility consistent with sound science and reasonably prudent conservation.”* Specifically, Moore called for flexibility in annual catch limits so that there could be a *“multiple year period in which an overall limit would be set but annual harvest could fluctuate based on fishing conditions, weather, water temperature, and any of the multitudes of other variables that affect harvest.”*

[Jeff Deem](#), testifying on behalf of the Recreational Fishing Alliance, spoke about how some MSA mandates affect local communities and how the MSA can be improved. *“Implementation of some MSA mandates cause significant socioeconomic harm on the recreational fishing community while producing no conservation benefit.”* Deem emphasized the importance of management flexibility: *“I urge the members of the Committee to incorporate limited flexibility in rebuilding fish stocks when deemed appropriate and when not a detriment to the overall conservation of the stock in question. Experience has shown that management flexibility can have both a positive impact on the fishing community and rebuilding objectives.”*

###

NaturalResources.house.gov

