

House Committee on Natural Resources
Full Committee Legislative Hearing on HR 594, HR 1013, HR 1646, HR 2304,
HR 2610, HR 2753, HR 2772, and HR 3061
Testimony of Rep. Jon Runyan on HR 1646 and HR 2772
December 1, 2011

Chairman Hastings and Ranking Member Markey thank you for holding this legislative hearing today. Federal fisheries management reform is an issue that is very important to those in coastal communities throughout the country, including those in my home state of New Jersey.

The commercial and recreational fishing industries are vitally important to our nation's struggling economy. In 2009 New Jersey's recreational and commercial fishing industries employed 46,400 people and represented a total added value to the economy of over \$2.8 trillion dollars. The goal of my two bills is to keep these 46,400 men and women working. These are both jobs bills.

Poor outdated science, overly cautious decision making, and top down flawed fishery management plans have all conspired to drive many of our struggling fishermen out of business and have damaged our coastal economies. Since the last re-authorization of Magnuson-Stevens in 2006 we have lost the delicate balance between a sustainable healthy fishing industry and conservation. These goals can and must be achieved without one goal overriding the other.

HR 1646, The American Angler Preservation Act, has a number of provisions that seek to restore this balance. These provisions include:

- Outside peer reviews of certain recommendations that increase or decrease annual catch limit quotas by 20% or more. This will ensure that drastic reductions in catch are scientifically accurate.
- Requiring all of these recommendations to be risk neutral. Too often in the past recommendations have included built in caution that has reduced the total allowable catch.
- Requiring the Secretary of Commerce to rule on fisheries disasters within 60 days. This will help to provide disaster relief to a fishing community in a timely fashion and prevent the Secretary from ignoring those struggling due to government regulation.
- Requiring Science and Statistical Committee 5 year research priorities to be presented to Congress. This will provide greater transparency and allow Congress to more thoroughly perform its oversight role.

- Adding flexibility to 10 year rebuilding plans
- Preventing the Secretary of Commerce from closing a fishery without accurate science
- Extending the Gulf and New England catch share referendums to the rest of the Eastern Seaboard

HR 2772, The Saving Fishing Jobs Act of 2011 seeks to tackle the issue of catch shares on the Atlantic coast and in the Gulf. These programs have been a favorite of NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco and she has chosen to force them upon Atlantic and Gulf fishermen, even going as far as calling catch share programs by a different name to avoid a referendum vote, as required by law, in New England. Ms. Lubchenco has a previously stated goal of seeing, “*a sizable fraction of the (fishing) fleet eliminated.*” Catch share programs are the means to her end goal of putting fishermen out of business.

Catch share programs have become increasingly unpopular due to the fact that they have been proven to consolidate the fishing fleet and put small fishermen out of business. The non-partisan consumer watchdog, *Food & Water Watch* has noted that if more catch share programs are implemented, “*...many traditional fishermen will be forced out of work, economies of their communities will crumble, there will be increased risk of harm to our oceans, and consumers will probably end up with lower-quality seafood* (<http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/fish/fair-fish>).” *Food and Water Watch* also found in 2010 after a New England catch share program was implemented, the number of boats in water went from 500 to 253 costing thousands of fishermen their jobs. Mr. Chairman, I would like to submit for the record a letter of support from *Food and Water Watch* for HR 2772, and a letter of support from the *Garden State Seafood Association* for both bills.

HR 2772 is simple. It extends the referendum vote on catch share programs throughout the entire Atlantic Coast and Gulf and closes down a new catch share program if it puts 15% or more of fishermen out of business. It does not eliminate the option to implement a new catch share program and applies only to pre-existing programs. It is meant to encourage those designing the programs to consider jobs. This is a common sense jobs bill; it will save the jobs that government regulators at NOAA are on a mission to destroy.

At a time of 9% unemployment we need to consider every jobs bill we can. My two bills will save jobs and I urge the Committee to fully consider each of them. Thank you for allowing me to testify today and I yield back the remainder of my time.