

May 29, 2015

Dear Members of Congress:

As executive chefs and owners of sustainable seafood restaurants from around the country, we are writing to respectfully urge you to protect and strengthen the law that governs our nation's commercial and recreational ocean fisheries, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

A sustainable supply of U.S.-caught ocean fish is an important element of our businesses. Discerning customers increasingly request that the seafood we provide is caught sustainably and from abundant populations.

Furthermore, more fish in the water means better business and greater benefits for our suppliers and coastal communities. In 2011, the National Marine Fisheries Service estimated that rebuilding all overfished populations in the United States would generate an additional \$31 billion in sales and support an additional 500,000 jobs.

In the 1980s and 90's, many fish populations were in significant decline due to overfishing. In 1996 and 2006, Congress strengthened the Magnuson-Stevens Act by requiring managers to rebuild depleted fish populations and to set annual catch limits to prevent overfishing. These science-based shifts in management have helped many of our nation's fisheries turn around to become more productive and sustainable. Since 2000, the United States has successfully rebuilt 37 depleted fish stocks nationwide.

Despite this recent progress, there is pressure to undermine the Magnuson-Stevens Act's science-based conservation principles, including calls to backslide on measures to end overfishing and rebuild depleted fish populations. This would be a huge mistake. We must not risk the hard-earned gains we are making to rebuild fish populations just to return to the policies of the past that resulted in pervasive overfishing problems across our coasts.

We must not only preserve our management successes, but keep building on them to reinforce our fisheries against emerging and ongoing threats to our oceans such as climate change, and loss of habitat. Specifically, we should strengthen the Magnuson-Stevens Act to better protect fish habitats, prevent the incidental catch of fish and other wildlife, and account for the critical role that forage fish play as prey for other fish and wildlife. We should analyze and understand the impact of fishing before opening or expanding fisheries or accessing new areas. And, we should implement plans to broaden the scope of managing fish populations, so we factor in the important interactions among fish populations, other marine wildlife, and habitats of the ocean ecosystem.

Congress is working to reauthorize the Magnuson-Stevens Act. A strong Magnuson-Stevens Act is crucial to ensure that our country's oceans and coastal waters can provide long-term benefits to fishermen, restaurants, seafood consumers, and coastal communities. As you consider changes to the Act, we ask you to oppose efforts to weaken the conservation provisions of the law and take the next step to improve management by adopting a more integrated, ecosystem-based approach to fishery management.

Thank you for considering our views. We look forward to working with you to advance stronger, healthier fisheries that can benefit our communities from ocean to plate.

Sincerely,

**Kerry Heffernan**

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New York, NY

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