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# U.S. House of Representatives

## Committee on Natural Resources

Washington, DC 20515

### Opening Statement of Chairman Doc Hastings House Committee on Natural Resources 1324 Longworth House Office Building Full Committee Oversight Hearing on

### *"The Reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act"*

Wednesday, March 13, 2013 at 10:00 a.m.

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I would like to welcome Members and today's witnesses to the first hearing this Congress on the reauthorization of the Nation's premiere fisheries law – the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act – more popularly known as the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

As many of you know, both the Full Committee and the Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs held several hearings in the 112th Congress on topics related to the Magnuson-Stevens Act. However, because the Act expires at the end of Fiscal Year 2013, the real work for the reauthorization will take place this Congress.

Managing fish - and fishermen - is a challenge. It requires a lot of balancing acts: between a sustainable harvest level and the maximum economic value for the fisheries; between recreational and commercial users of the same resource; between different gear types in the same fisheries; and between different states.

As we begin the reauthorization process, we will review the successes of the Act and determine what provisions Congress should examine to make the Act work better.

This hearing is intended to highlight issues that could provide the basis for further hearings. We will examine how the Act could or should be modified to provide better management of the Nation's fishery resources as well as provide better economic certainty for recreational fishermen, commercial fishermen, and fishery dependent communities.

In 2006, Congress passed the last reauthorization of the Act. The goals of that reauthorization were to base management decisions on science and to require accountability. While both are good goals, they've been difficult to achieve.

As we found out during hearings last Congress – many of the current challenges may not be due to the Act itself, but rather with its implementation. We also heard loud and clear that there is a lack of accurate, timely data for making sound management decisions.

Judging by the number of bills to amend the Magnuson-Stevens Act introduced last Congress, there is certainly an interest among Members – and their constituents - in modifying the Act.

Legislation introduced in the 112th Congress included proposals to modify a number of provisions in the Act including: modification of the Annual Catch Limit requirement... additional flexibility in rebuilding timeframes... additional transparency for councils and councils' scientific and statistical committees...new uses of funds collected from fisheries fines and penalties...modification to the disaster assistance provision...and a definition and restrictions on catch share management programs.

Fishermen and coastal communities that depend on healthy fisheries are certainly facing challenges. The Secretary of Commerce declared seven fisheries disasters in 2012 and several more have been requested. New England is facing severe cuts in the quotas for important fisheries. The Gulf of Mexico is facing severely restrictive fishing seasons for recreational fishermen. The Pacific Northwest is seeing management and data collection costs growing with an ever increasing burden falling on fishermen. All of these fisheries and all of these regions need economic stability.

During this reauthorization process I also hope to examine the need for better data collection. There has got to be a better way to get up-to-date, accurate data on the fishery resources and on the harvest levels. Congress attempted to start this process in 2006 by requiring an overhaul of the recreation data collection process. Unfortunately, that work is still underway. But this is not just an issue for the recreational fisheries. Increasing burdens are being placed on commercial fishermen in the Pacific and the North Pacific and, at the same time, new uses of technology are not keeping pace with innovation.

The Committee will examine all of these issues and I am sure more will arise as the process continues. Luckily, Congressional hearings will not be the only source of information for this Committee. The eight regional fishery management councils are hosting the "Managing Our Nation's Fisheries 3" conference in May that will certainly add information for us to consider. In addition, the General Accounting Office, the Department of Commerce's Inspector General, and the Ocean Studies Board of the National Academy of Sciences have or will be releasing reports that will aid us in this effort.

I look forward to hearing the testimony from today's witnesses.