

So-called Modern Fish Act Takes Us Backwards

Current legislation could return us to the times when overfishing and fish scarcity harmed seabirds and coastal economies.

Congress is threatening to roll back one of the most successful conservation laws in the United States. Since 1976, the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) has successfully managed fish in our nation's waters. Through bipartisan support, true modernization of the law in 1996 and 2006, and science-based management, the MSA has successfully brought back 44 fish populations from overfishing. These recoveries have been good news for seabirds, such as Atlantic Puffins, Bald Eagles, Common Terns, and other marine wildlife like whales, dolphins, and larger fish who rely on many of the fish managed under this law for food.

But now, all of these successes could be undermined by efforts in Congress to weaken the Act. On July 11th, the House of Representatives is scheduled to vote on the "Modern Fish Act," or H.R. 200. This bill reverses the core science-based management provisions in the Magnuson-Stevens Act that has kept fish populations stable – and plentiful for birds and people – in America for years.

Under this proposal, businesses that rely on stable fish populations – outfitters, guides, fishermen, tackle shops, restaurants – would be left high and dry, not to mention the many fish-eating bird species who would be faced with dwindling food supplies. Science-based fisheries management makes sure that there's fish for the next year; the proposed law subverts the science by raising fishing or catch limits on critical species, and distorting the timeline a population of fish needs to recover after it has been depleted.

The once very real threat of fishing industry collapse was made a thing of the past through savvy problem-solving and science, and unraveling the decades of success under the Magnuson-Stevens makes little sense in the face of years of evidence. Why do you think so many chefs and commercial fishing groups oppose this new proposal?

H.R. 200 takes aim at not just an economically sound law, but one that safeguards our country's natural areas and wildlife for the benefit of future generations. Solid conservation practices make good economic sense, and ensure that the lakes, streams, and shorelines of the United States are places where Americans can enjoy the beauty of this country, and take refuge in them for reflection, recreation, and relaxation for decades to come. H.R. 200 puts the legacy of our natural resources at risk for short-term gain, and that's a trade not worth the incredible loss.

Please send an email to Congresswoman Elizabeth Esty requesting that she represent the people of Litchfield County, not the special interests in Washington encouraging her to vote no on the short-sighted H.R.200.

Congresswoman Esty can be reached using the following link: <https://esty.house.gov/contact>