

Tuesday, November 29, 2016

The Honorable...  
XXXXXX...  
Washington, DC 205XX

Dear:

We operate and represent businesses <sup>and organizations</sup> that cater to clients who value the health of our waters and the wildlife it sustains. The ecotourism industry in New Jersey is not only vital to our local economies, it is robust — for example, ecotourism in Cape May County alone represents a \$544 million industry. And, these benefits extend far beyond our coastal waters to include the major rivers and estuaries which serve as the spawning areas for species such as sturgeon and shad.

Ensuring sustainable fish populations and conserving marine resources are important to us and our customers.

As Congress considers the next reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), we request your leadership to ensure it is updated to advance a big picture approach, which will better protect our natural resources and the economies that depend on them.

MSA is forty years old, and since its enactment we've learned more about how best to maintain productive ecosystems. MSA can be improved to help managers fully utilize the knowledge we have today and account for the big picture when making management decisions. This means conserving forage (or bait) fish, which is what other fish and wildlife eat, protecting where fish live (habitat), and reducing wasteful catch (bycatch), in addition to other priority actions

Bait fish form an essential link in the marine food webs and are necessary to ensure healthy fisheries and oceans, but the MSA does not guarantee conservation measures that account for this critical role. The law should be updated to conserve these important fish.

Additionally, ensuring healthy fish habitats is a critical component of sustainable fisheries management. It is important to address the impacts of certain types of fishing and other activities, such as pollution, in order to conserve habitats for fish. Therefore, the MSA needs to include greater protections of essential habitats, such as deep sea corals and other spawning sites that fish need for reproduction, shelter, and growth.

People come to us because they want to see wildlife, but the MSA currently does not do enough to ensure bycatch is sufficiently minimized. Some fishing practices catch non-target wildlife including birds, sea turtles and non-targeted fish. We would like you to ensure that the law reduces this wasteful catch.

Coastal and river-based businesses and other enterprises that are involved in the ecotourism industry are impacted by how the U.S. manages fish populations under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. From tour operators to beachside restaurants, bed-and-breakfasts to dive shops, businesses like ours can benefit from a thoughtful bill that advances a big picture approach to fisheries

management. Please understand that inclusion of big picture management principles in the next reauthorization of the MSA is critical to our continued economic success.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

Amy Coss  
Owner, Sojourner  
Lambertville, NJ

Glenn Davis  
President, Delaware River Towns Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau  
Branch Manager, Benchmark Lending  
Lambertville, NJ

Lloyd Davis  
Chairman, Bike Lambertville  
Lambertville NJ

Joann DelVescio  
Executive Director, NJ Campground Owners Association  
Marmora, NJ

Janet Factor  
Executive Director and Past President, Frenchtown Business & Professionals Association  
Frenchtown, NJ

Rob Ferber  
Director, Pinelands Adventures  
Shamong, NJ

Scott Krawiec  
Owner, Bend The Rod and Island Girl Charters  
Cape May, NJ

David B. Morgan  
Executive Director, Delaware River Towns Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau  
Lambertville, NJ

Bob Provost  
Acting President / CEO, Greater Newark Convention & Visitors Bureau  
Newark, NJ

Arounkone Sananikone  
Owner, Pure Energy Cycling  
Lambertville NJ

J. Colby Smith, Esq.  
Executive Director, Prallsville Mills/Delaware River Mill Society  
Stockton, NJ

Molly Sumridge  
President, Frenchtown Business & Professional Association  
Kindred Companions LLC  
Frenchtown, NJ

Richard Vohden  
Owner  
Pequest Valley Farms  
Andover, NJ

Dan Whitaker  
Owner, The Inn at Lambertville Station  
Lambertville, NJ



## What is the Magnuson-Stevens Act?

The Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) is the primary law that governs management of U.S. ocean fish. First passed in 1976, the MSA fosters long-term biological and economic sustainability of our nation's marine fisheries.

MSA is due for reauthorization, presenting Congress with an opportunity to modernize it and incorporate a more comprehensive, science-based fishery management. Reauthorization of Magnuson-Stevens Act has always been a bipartisan effort, which has been critical to its passage and successes. But this Congress, two partisan bills have already been introduced. If we are going to successfully reauthorize and update the law, we need to return to the model that has worked in the past. It takes time, sometimes years and multiple congresses, but what results is legislation that generally works to create healthier, more sustainable fish populations that can benefit fishermen, coastal businesses, the ocean, and future generations.

## How does it impact you?

Those in the commercial fishing and food industries are especially impacted by the MSA. Restaurants and chefs depend on the bounty of seafood harvested in U.S. fisheries, and are heavily invested in a healthy ocean ecosystem to providing sustainable seafood. With proper management of our fisheries, restaurants, chefs and seafood lovers will continue to have access to local, sustainably caught seafood.

Patrons of coastal businesses – including tour operators, charter fishing boats, seaside restaurants and dive shops to name a few – all want to experience a coast that boasts a thriving marine habitat - one that ensures a sustainable supply of fish for commercial and recreational fisheries. But the well-recognized importance of protecting habitat, avoiding waste of fish not intended to be caught, and protecting forage, also known as bait fish in supporting healthy fish populations is not yet properly integrated into the MSA. Identifying, conserving, and protecting essential habitat, along with protecting forage and reducing unintended catch, also known as bycatch, is key to supporting fishery production and the many businesses that rely on a diverse and healthy ecosystem.

## What is the solution?

An updated MSA can ensure that the nation will manage its fisheries for the greatest benefit of all, including future generations. There are a few simple principles that Congress can include:

- **Conserve bait fish** to ensure that enough prey remain in the water for larger fish, seabirds, and marine mammals.
- **Protect fish habitat** so fish have safe places to breed, feed, grow, and take shelter.
- **Minimize bycatch**—the catching, discarding, and often killing of nontarget fish and other sea life, wasting valuable natural resources and opportunity for fishermen.
- **Proceed with caution** to ensure that new fisheries are sustainable from the start.
- **Create fishery ecosystem plans** to serve as a road map for improving management decisions.

## How can you get involved?

The health of our nation's fisheries is an issue that ultimately impacts almost everyone. The issues highlighted above have the opportunity to be addressed during MSA's reauthorization, but Congress needs to be further educated. Please let us know if you would be willing to do one or more of the following:

- Send a letter to your Member of Congress
- Call your Congressional representative
- Sign a pledge to support principles that will improve the MSA; this pledge card will be delivered to Members of Congress
- Sign up to receive periodic email updates and action alerts to learn how to get further involved.