

**Alaska Wilderness League • American Rivers • Clean Water Action • Defenders of
Wildlife • Earthjustice • Environmental Defense Fund • Friends of the Earth •
Greenpeace • League of Conservation Voters • National Audubon Society • Natural
Resources Defense Council • Ocean Conservancy • Oceana • The Pew Charitable Trusts •
Physicians for Social Responsibility**

May 28, 2015

RE: Oppose H.R. 1335

Dear Representative:

On behalf of our members and supporters nationwide, **we urge you to oppose H.R. 1335** because it threatens the significant progress that has been made in restoring U.S. fisheries, and the resulting environmental and economic benefits, by rolling back key provisions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act). The bill also undercuts cornerstone environmental laws, like the Endangered Species Act (ESA), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Antiquities Act, and National Marine Sanctuaries Act, and thus undermines protections for rare and vulnerable marine species, presidential authority to protect special ocean places for future generations, and public involvement in important government decisions about our ocean resources.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act is one of America's most effective natural resource management laws. As a result of amendments made during the last two bipartisan reauthorizations, the law ensures that fisheries management is science-based and that fish stocks depleted from historic overfishing are rebuilt and restored to healthy, thriving populations. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), 37 commercially and recreationally important fish stocks that had been overfished have been rebuilt to healthy population levels since 2000. At the same time, the number of stocks subject to overfishing has been cut by two-thirds since 2006, when the Magnuson-Stevens Act was last reauthorized, leading to more fish in the water and better fishing opportunities. Improved conservation has led to increased U.S. seafood sales impacts, which set a record in 2012, and to a recreational fishing industry that generated \$58 billion in sales impacts in 2012.

H.R. 1335 would roll back core tenets of the Magnuson-Stevens Act that are responsible for so much of this success to date and critical to sustainable fisheries in the long-term. Among other provisions, the bill would cripple the Magnuson-Stevens Act's effective requirement for the expedient rebuilding of overfished fisheries. H.R. 1335 would also eliminate the law's requirement to set annual catch limits for potentially hundreds of fish stocks, so that they do not become overfished in the future.

In addition, H.R. 1335 would weaken four other key environmental laws:

- **Endangered Species Act** – The ESA protects plants, fish, and wildlife that are on the brink of extinction. H.R. 1335 would fundamentally change the ESA by seeking to hand over decisions on the recovery of endangered and threatened marine species impacted by fishing to Regional Fishery Management Councils. The Councils would be required to adhere to the Magnuson-Stevens Act, not the ESA, in implementing fishing restrictions as part of recovery actions, could have conflicts of interests, and do not have the resources or expertise to carry out this role.
- **National Environmental Policy Act** – NEPA ensures that NOAA conducts adequate review of key fishery decisions, including a review of their broader effects, and that the public can adequately be informed of, review, and comment on these decisions. H.R. 1335 would circumvent NEPA's environmental protections by both watering down NEPA's requirements and effectively handing the process over to the more narrowly focused Regional Fishery Management Councils. The Councils are federal advisory committees, not federal agencies, and lack the experience and expertise to conduct NEPA reviews that provide for inclusion of the broader public and the full range of stakeholders interested in the future of our oceans.
- **Antiquities Act** – Since the Antiquities Act was enacted under President Theodore Roosevelt, the law has allowed Presidents on a bipartisan basis to act swiftly to protect America's most iconic natural, cultural, and historic places, such as the almost 140,000 square mile Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands established by President George W. Bush in 2006. H.R. 1335 would severely constrict the Antiquities Act by stripping the law's authority to put into place any protections in National Monuments that impact fishing activities.
- **National Marine Sanctuaries Act** – Since its enactment in 1972, the National Marine Sanctuaries Act has allowed for the protection of areas of the marine environment that are nationally significant due to their conservation, recreational, ecological, historical, scientific, cultural, or archeological qualities. This bill would remove authority under the Sanctuaries Act to restrict fishing in a National Marine Sanctuary, even if such fishing is causing significant harm to one of these special marine areas.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act is working. It has led to the conservation of our fisheries, the improved long-term health of our fishing communities, and healthier ocean ecosystems. H.R. 1335 would reward that success by bringing it to an end.

Please protect our nation's fisheries, everyone who depends on them, and the ocean environment by opposing H.R. 1335.

Sincerely,

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