

August 23, 2017
Kenai Peninsula College

**Reauthorization of the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA):
Oversight of Fisheries Management Successes and Challenges**

Testimony of Reed Morisky

Good afternoon everyone. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony regarding potential improvements to the Magnuson- Stevens Act.

For introduction- my name is Reed Morisky. I am one of seven members of the Alaska Board of Fisheries. I live in Fairbanks, Alaska where I have operated a sport fishing guide service for 34 years. I live almost 400 miles from the nearest saltwater. That makes some people happy, others, it gives them concern. I have a close family member that has been involved in commercial fishing in Alaska for several decades.

The reauthorization of the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation Act offers an opportunity to address issues that affect Alaskans and others that depend on our fisheries resources.

Questions relating to possible suggestions for how the current management of the MSA could be improved, include:

- Will this reauthorization process incorporate provisions for flexibility in the management of the sport fishery? There is concern that the current management structure is too rigid and does not allow for variables the industry has requested, while accommodating conservation principles.
- Will there be an improvement in conducting comprehensive stock assessments, to include real time sport fish catch reporting?
There is consensus in the sport fleet that the initial allocations in many fisheries did not adequately reflect what was being taken by the sport fleets, nor did it account for competition between user groups. Currently, every region collects different levels of information differently (and giving answers is typically voluntary). The provided information isn't easily accessible to the average fisherman. Will this be addressed?
- Will the current data collection program, (that would assist in resolving these concerns), receive adequate funding?

- Much needed, additional information is needed by all user groups in the waters covered by the MSA. Will this reauthorization process address the need for better catch data and the economic value of the sport fisheries, both direct and indirect? There is a concern that future allocations/ dedications of budget, personnel, and management efforts should be made with this economic information available.
- If the Federal Government takes over management of the EEZ that since state hood has been managed under state law, are they ready to determine the harvest limits for each sector? How would the differing management standards be coordinated? How would federal management mesh the national standards with state management? Should the national standards reflect the significant presence of sport fishing and personal use users?
- The National Marine Fisheries Service has found that the Magnuson-Stevens Act's concept of optimum yield is equivalent to the State's sustained yield principle. The state of Alaska mandates the fisheries resources are for the maximum benefit of people. Should the MSA be amended to accommodate multiple users? Coupled with this issue, should the MSA provide for research for freshwater fisheries? Should the MSA National Standards incorporate the state of Alaska's escapement goal management strategy?
- Recreational fisheries are open access. Because of this, it is not possible to manage the annual catch down to the last pound caught each year. It is virtually impossible to predict how many anglers will participate in these fisheries in advance. The current management structure that results in rigid catch limits, often based on limited stock assessments, can artificially restrict the sustainability of sport fishing-related businesses and limit the public's access to public trust resources. Will these issues be addressed in the reauthorization process?
- MSA was originally designed to address commercial fishing and has been effective in rebuilding many stocks.
- However, there is a concern that MSA has never properly addressed the importance of other fishing sectors; specifically, the Alaska centric sectors of Subsistence, Personal Use and Sport/ Recreational fishing. There is a concern that this has, or will, lead to shortened or even cancelled seasons, reduced bag limits, and unnecessary restrictions.
- Recreational fishing and commercial fishing are two fundamentally different activities needing distinctly different management tools.

- Management strategies are in desperate need of an update and more emphasis needs to be put on recreational fishing.
- Some potential changes to consider when amending the MSA are:
- Require allocation reviews on a regular basis (3-5 years). Develop clear, objective criteria for those reviews to allow the process to be less controversial.
- Allow for the use of alternative management approaches for non-commercial fishing, similar to state-based models that better align with the nature of non-commercial fishing and available data.
- Poundage-based quotas are difficult to implement with anglers and harvesting MSY is not their goal.
- Provide flexibility in rebuilding timelines that are applicable to the biology of the stock and incorporate the needs of the fisheries-rebuilding schedules are not “one size fits all” as is currently mandated with the 10-year timeline.
- Improve recreational fisheries data by considering; supporting and incorporating data from qualified third-party data collection systems, including modern sources such as from smartphones, to provide for improved accuracy and timeliness of harvest information. The time lag in data submission makes timely management decisions difficult.
- *In summary....*
- Although they have a similar economic impact, recreational and commercial fishing are fundamentally different activities.
- Recognizing that the commercial fishing industry is economically important to the US economy, over 11 million Americans enjoy saltwater recreational fishing. The sport contributes \$63.4 billion to the nation’s economy annually and supports 439,242 American jobs.
- Thank you again for this opportunity to testify on these important reauthorization issues.

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