

April 10, 2019

The Honorable Debbie Dingell
U.S. House of Representatives
116 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brian Mast
U.S. House of Representatives
2182 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Dingell and Mast,

On behalf of the nation's recreational fishing and boating community, thank you for your leadership in support of marine conservation through introducing the Forage Fish Protection Act.

The saltwater recreational fishing community is comprised of 10 million angler conservationists and thousands of businesses who strongly support healthy marine resources. As part of its conservation mission, the recreational fishing community has long advocated for efforts to conserve forage fish – the suite of smaller fish that provide much of the food for sport fish.

For example, in 2014, the Commission on Saltwater Recreational Fisheries Management, chaired by Bass Pro Shops Founder and CEO Johnny Morris and Maverick Boats President Scott Deal, released a report identifying key policy changes to the federal marine fisheries management system to benefit fisheries conservation and public access. One of the six key recommendations of that report was improving management and conservation of forage fish. Your legislation would follow through on this recommendation by implementing important considerations for forage fish into the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act).

Forage fish provide food for nearly all recreationally important fish species, as well as seabirds and other marine life. Meanwhile, human demand for these nutrient-rich species continues to increase. Because these integral parts of the marine food web are becoming increasingly targeted for commercial exploitation, it is critically important that forage fish management accounts for their role in marine ecosystems.

Unfortunately, the Magnuson-Stevens Act is not currently designed to account for the unique role of forage fish in the marine ecosystem, instead relying on traditional single-species management approaches and the concept of maximum sustainable yield. Your legislation would require that the impacts on fish populations and the marine ecosystem be considered before allowing harvest on any currently unmanaged forage species, and that predator needs be accounted for in existing management plans for forage fish.

We are grateful for your bipartisan commitment to marine fisheries conservation through the science-based forage fish measures included in the Forage Fish Protection Act. We stand ready to assist you as you work toward passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

American Sportfishing Association
BoatU.S.
Center for Sportfishing Policy
Coastal Conservation Association
Coastside Fishing Club
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Fly Fishers International
Golden Gate Salmon Association
Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation

International Game Fish Association
Jersey Coast Angler's Association
National Marine Manufacturers Association
National Professional Anglers Association
Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association
Rhode Island Saltwater Anglers Association
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
The Billfish Foundation