



January 17, 2024

The Honorable Cliff Bentz
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and
Fisheries
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and
Fisheries
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Bentz and Ranking Member Huffman,

In advance of the Subcommittee's January 18, 2024 hearing, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) would like to offer the following statement for the record in support of two bills before the Subcommittee. Specifically, CSF strongly supports the Youth Coastal Fishing Program Act (H.R. 3925) and the Alabama Underwater Forest National Marine Sanctuary and Protection Act (H.R. 897).

While the nation's coastline represents less than 10% of the contiguous land area in the United States, around 40% of our population lives near the coast. The close proximity of so many Americans to our rich marine and Great Lakes resources provides a perfect opportunity to introduce young people to recreational fishing and instill a deep appreciation of our nation's marine and freshwater environments. NOAA is the only federal land and water management agency that does not have a dedicated recreational program to introduce the public to the outdoors. The bipartisan and bicameral Youth Coastal Fishing Program Act (H.R. 3925) would create another pathway for federal agencies responsible for management of our natural resources to connect the public with those resources.

The bipartisan Alabama Underwater Forest National Marine Sanctuary and Protection Act (H.R. 897) seeks to protect a recently discovered underwater cypress forest off the coast of Alabama. This highly unique substrate provides habitat for fish, an exceptional destination for divers, and a rare opportunity for researchers to explore our nation's biological and geological history dating back at least 50,000 years. While the bill seeks to protect this historic national treasure, it specifically ensures that the public will be able to experience the monument through activities like recreational fishing and diving.

Both pieces of legislation are important to the nation's saltwater angling community. CSF sincerely appreciates the Subcommittee for scheduling a hearing on these bills, and we urge the

full House Committee on Natural Resources to report each favorably during the next timely Committee business meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris Horton".

Chris Horton
Senior Director, Fisheries Policy