

The Magnuson-Stevens Act *A Bipartisan Legacy of Success*

Since 1976, when what is now called the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) was first signed into law, Republicans and Democrats have agreed that conserving America's ocean fish makes good economic and environmental sense. **Today, Congress should continue this tradition of bipartisan support for the MSA and preserve its legacy of success by opposing any efforts to weaken the law.**

Over the years, Congress has recognized the value of protecting ocean fish resources from overfishing (taking fish faster than they can reproduce) by providing managers with the legal tools to sustainably manage our nation's ocean fisheries. Through multiple reauthorizations, Congress strengthened the MSA by mandating an end to overfishing through science-based annual catch limits and also by requiring that depleted fish populations be rebuilt to healthy levels that can support thriving commercial and recreational fisheries. **Both Republicans and Democrats have supported this law since it was enacted more than 35 years ago.**

In 1976, the Fishery Conservation and Management Act (the precursor to the MSA) was passed with bipartisan support; its aim was to eliminate rampant foreign fishing off the U.S. coast and promote the domestic fishing industry. Even at this time, the law called for management measures designed to prevent overfishing.

Continued >>

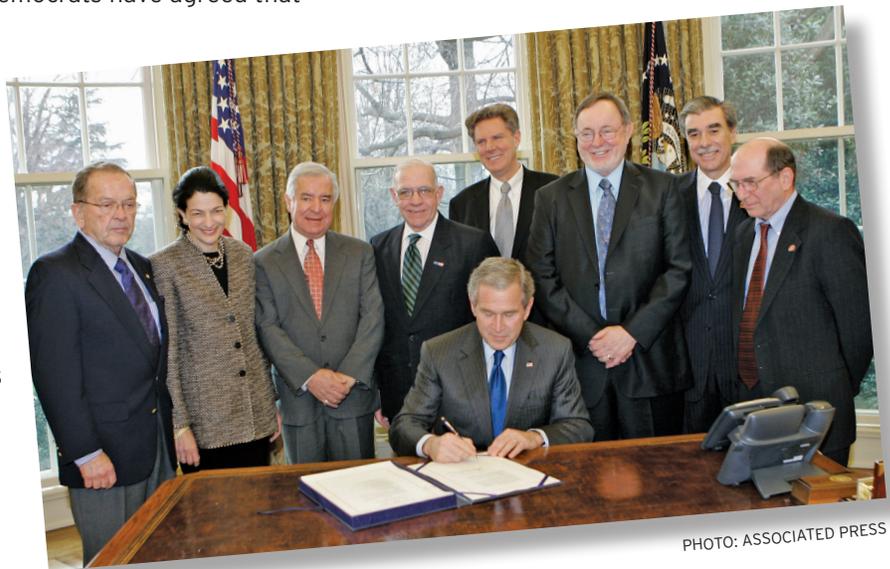


PHOTO: ASSOCIATED PRESS

President George W. Bush signs the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006, joined by Sen. Ted Stevens (R-AK), left; Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-ME); Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV); Rep. Jim Saxton (R-NJ); Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Rep. Don Young (R-AK); Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez; and Rep. Wayne Gilchrest (R-MD).

"This much-needed piece of legislation would enable our nation to protect and conserve its enormously rich fishing resources."

—Sen. John Beall Jr. (R-MD), 1976

"Legislation such as this is desperately needed in order to preserve and manage our continued fishery resources."

—Rep. Leonor Sullivan (D-MO), 1976

"The protection of our coastal fisheries has long been a major issue in this country. ... It seems, therefore, appropriate that the Congress should, in this bicentennial year, be on the brink of a restatement of strong interest in the conservation and management of our fisheries."

—Sen. Henry Jackson (D-WA), 1976

"To me this is the most significant piece of legislation to be presented to this Congress. It will be the hallmark of conservation of fisheries throughout the world."

—Sen. Ted Stevens (R-AK), 1996

In 1996, 47 Republican senators, led by Ted Stevens (AK), and 38 Democrats voted to pass the Sustainable Fisheries Act amendments to the MSA, which shifted the focus of the act from promoting fishing to conserving sustainable fish populations.

In 2006, Republicans and Democrats, again led by Sen. Stevens, worked together to strengthen the MSA by requiring managers to set science-based annual catch limits that do not allow overfishing. President George W. Bush signed the reauthorization, with these strong conservation requirements, into law on Jan. 12, 2007.

The requirements are working, providing economic benefits to fishing communities and the nation as a whole, and promise to provide even greater returns as fish populations rebuild. According to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), rebuilding all U.S. fish populations would lead to a **\$31 billion increase in annual sales and support for half a million new U.S. jobs.**¹

Congress should continue this **bipartisan tradition** and support the MSA by providing increased and dedicated funding to strengthen research and monitoring programs, which are critical for sustainable fishing.

¹ Testimony of NOAA Assistant Administrator for Fisheries Eric Schwaab on implementation of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries and the Coast Guard, p. 3, March 8, 2011, www.legislative.noaa.gov/112testimony.html.

"This is a vital bill. It is a good bill for the environment ... and I share the view it is the most important environmental legislation that we will pass in this session."

—Sen. John Kerry (D-MA), 1996

"S. 39 represents a truly bipartisan approach to fisheries issues that are of vital importance to our nation's economy and environment."

—Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI), 1996

"This is a good piece of legislation. It has been a long time coming. This bill will do good for our oceans and for our fisheries."

—Rep. Don Young (R-AK), 2006

"I'm proud to uphold and build on the legacy of Washington Senator Warren Magnuson, whose vision helped preserve our robust and vibrant fishing communities."

—Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA), 2006

"This landmark legislation was originally sponsored by several great friends of Alaska—Senator Magnuson, our own Senator Ted Stevens, and Senator Inouye—and co-sponsored by several Republican and Democratic members of the Committee. It represented a truly bipartisan effort to carefully manage one of America's greatest assets, our fisheries."

—Sen. Mark Begich (D-AK), 2011

"This committee passed the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act more than five years ago and reinstated the critical balance between marine environments and the economic imperative of commercial fishing to coastal communities in Maine and elsewhere."

—Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-ME), 2011

"Based on the actions of the fishery management councils, it appears that the U.S. has fundamentally ended overfishing in federally-managed domestic fisheries. This is an enormous achievement, and one that Congress and the Administration clearly intended in its 2007 reauthorization of [the MSA]. ... The Magnuson-Stevens Act is without doubt the premier fisheries law in the world."

—Dr. Bill Hogarth, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration assistant administrator for fisheries during the George W. Bush administration, 2011



For more information, please contact:

Lee Crockett | Director of Federal Fisheries Policy | Pew Environment Group
202-552-2065 | lcrockett@pewtrusts.org

For additional resources, visit us at www.EndOverfishing.org.