



March 3, 2016

The Honorable David Vitter
Chairman, Senate Committee on Small
Business and Entrepreneurship
428A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Small
Business and Entrepreneurship
428A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Vitter and Ranking Member Shaheen,

As the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship meets to hear testimony on the Magnuson Stevens Act (MSA) and its impacts on small businesses, we urge you to keep in mind the myriad benefits this landmark legislation has had on Gulf coast fisheries, thousands of fishermen and the millions consumers nationwide who depend on robust, sustainably-managed U.S. fisheries.

The fisheries management process outlined under MSA is working. The Department of Commerce, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the eight Regional Fishery Management Councils work together to monitor, manage and enforce a program that has led the United States to its position as a global leader in responsibly managed fisheries and sustainable seafood. Guided by 10 National Standards of sustainability, these agencies monitor, manage and legally enforce all marine fisheries in the United States in a way that allows all Americans to access these resources, while also preserving fish stocks for the future. As a result, U.S. fish populations are rebuilding and overall fish abundance is improving. Since 2000, thirty-two fish stocks in the U.S. have been rebuilt meaning that routine stock assessments conducted by fishery scientists indicate that the abundance of the stock is above the maximum sustainable yield.

In the Gulf of Mexico, both commercial and recreational fisheries are thriving side-by-side and continue to be managed in a way that benefits all participants. For example, in all Gulf states except Mississippi, fishing license sales have increased from 2004 until 2013. Under MSA, the Gulf red snapper catch has rebuilt from 5 million pounds in 2007 to more than 14 million pounds in 2014.

The transparent, stakeholder-driven Gulf Council process was crafted under the MSA in a way that ensures all components of the fishery community are given a voice in a process that is carefully overseen by the Department of Commerce and driven by science-based decisions. Small businesses like those represented in the vast Gulf coast seafood supply chain, including thousands of harvesters, restaurants, distributors and retailers, rely on the certainty that federal management provides in order to plan for the future. And, by preserving the integrity of the Magnuson Stevens Act, you can help reassure our community that this will be the case well into the future.

Again, as you consider impacts of the Magnuson Stevens Act on small businesses nationally and across the Gulf coast, please keep these thoughts in mind.

Sincerely,

Harlon Pearce
Chairman

Margaret Henderson
Executive Director