

September 7, 2022

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Republican Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Republican Leader
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Republican Leader McConnell, and Republican Leader McCarthy,

Thank you for the advancement of several important pieces of legislation over the course of the 117th Congress to date that will benefit public access and the health of our nation's fisheries. For example, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act achieved many important regional and national priorities, from improving fish passage to restoring the Great Lakes to reauthorizing the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust.

The COVID-19 pandemic drew millions of Americans to the outdoors due to the closure of other activities and a desire to take in the physical and mental health benefits of participating in outdoor recreation. As Americans adjust to the latest stage of the pandemic, recreational fishing remains extremely popular. In 2021, 52.4 million Americans went fishing – nearly 2.3 million more than did so in 2019. Recreational fishing has a \$128 billion annual economic impact, supporting over 800,000 jobs.

Throughout the country, recreational fishing opportunities are based on the fundamental pillars of conservation and access. To ensure Americans continue to have places to fish, and healthy fish populations to pursue, Congress must continue to take action to secure these opportunities into the future.

Several high priority bills that will support current and future recreational fishing opportunities have steadily advanced through the legislative process. We strongly support final passage of these priority bills in the short time remaining in this Congress:

- **America's Outdoor Recreation Act of 2022 (S. 3266)** – Federal lands play an important role in providing recreational fishing opportunities. Now is the time to modernize our recreation policies for the 21st century as visitation and demand for outdoor recreation is increasing in every corner of the country. The America's Outdoor Recreation Act of 2022 is a comprehensive legislative package that contains 14 provisions, ranging from improving visitation data to expanding broadband service at park sites to addressing the spread of aquatic invasive species. The America's Outdoor Recreation Act was reported out of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee unanimously on May 3, 2022.
- **Natural Resources Provisions Not Included in the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 (H. R. 4346)** – While we appreciate the lengthy and difficult negotiations that went into the final CHIPS and Science Act, we were disappointed that several provisions included in earlier versions of this legislative package were not ultimately included. Division H of the America Competes Act of 2022 (H.R. 4521) included several priorities that would benefit fisheries conservation, including banning highly destructive drift gillnets off the California coast (H.R. 404 and S. 273), restoring coral reefs (H.R. 160 and S. 46), understanding and restoring coastal blue carbon ecosystems

(H.R. 2750 and S. 3255) and improving the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's ability to slow the spread of invasive species (S. 626). We urge Congress to return to and pass these provisions through whatever legislative vehicle possible.

- **Recovering America's Wildlife Act (H.R. 2773 and S. 2372)** – The decline of our fish and wildlife populations and loss of natural habitat is one of America's greatest threats. Scientists estimate that one-third of fish and wildlife species in the United States are at risk of becoming threatened or endangered. The Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) would dedicate \$1.4 billion annually to state and tribal fish and wildlife agencies to implement science-based recovery plans. These conservation and restoration efforts will help ensure fish and wildlife species do not become endangered. In the process, cleaner waters and healthier fish habitat will be generated, ultimately benefitting fishing opportunities. RAWA was reported out of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on April 27, 2022 and passed the House on June 14, 2022.
- **Reinvesting in America's Shoreline Economies & Ecosystems Act (S. 2130)** – As coastal communities continue to endure stronger and more frequent natural disasters, healthy coastlines and protected aquatic ecosystems are all the more important to grow the outdoor recreation sector and make our nation's economy more resilient in the face of disaster. The Reinvesting in America's Shoreline Economies & Ecosystems (RISEE) Act would diversify federal conservation funding by dedicating a portion of offshore wind revenue to coastal resiliency investments. Additionally, the RISEE Act would amend the Gulf of Mexico Security Act of 2006 to dedicate more of the existing offshore energy production revenue from the Gulf to support regional coastal restoration and resiliency. The RISEE Act was reported out of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on July 21, 2022.
- **Water Resources Development Act (H.R.7776)** – Reauthorized on biennial basis since 2014, the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) authorizes civil works projects carried out by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), which are imperative to supporting recreational boating access. WRDA plays a key role in adequately funding USACE, the nation's leading provider for outdoor recreation opportunities and boating access points. The current WRDA reauthorization moves towards better prioritization of Corps programs and activities that enable the nation's boaters and anglers to get out on the water. Similar versions of WRDA passed the House on June 8, 2022, and the Senate on July 28, 2022, and now must be conferenced.

While we recognize the many challenges facing the nation, recreational fishing and the outdoors remain vital to the nation's economic prosperity and public wellbeing. We urge you to ensure that due attention is given to these vitally important bills that have already significantly advanced in the legislative process, but require additional action. We stand ready to assist you in getting these bills enacted and solidifying the 117th Congress's legacy of supporting outdoor recreation.

Sincerely,

American Sportfishing Association
Angler Action Foundation
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (B.A.S.S.)
Bonefish & Tarpon Trust
Center for Sportfishing Policy
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Guy Harvey Ocean Foundation
International Game Fish Association

Marine Retailers Association of the Americas
Major League Fishing
National Marine Manufacturers Association
National Professional Anglers Association
The Bass Federation
The Walleye Federation
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Wild Oceans