

November 16, 2021

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 the Forage Fish Conservation 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 Conservation Act. We strongly support this legislation and look forward to assisting you and the House Natural Resources Committee with its passage.

Sincerely,

American Sportfishing Association  
Bass Pro Shops  
BoatUS

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