

Katherine Romans
Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
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Dear Ms. Bordallo,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to comment on the recent Subcommittee on Insular Affairs meeting on the role and extent of science used in rulemaking under the current Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

What you and your committee heard in testimony from NOAA's own scientists and from members of the fishing community was overwhelmingly consistent; that ***the means, methods and results of NMFS stock assessments are wholly inadequate to provide any meaningful basis for establishing the annual catch limits for reef fisheries in all the council regions.***

You heard that the assessments conflict with direct observations of reef fish populations by charterboat operators, commercial fishermen and everyday recreational fishermen.

You also heard that imposition of these foundationless and often backwards regulatory constraints have had and will increasingly have a devastating effect on commercial and recreational fisheries economies across the nation.

For example, according the Department of Commerce's Fisheries Economic of the United States, recreational saltwater anglers from North Carolina to Texas numbered over 12 million, spent more than 26 BILLION dollars, created an additional economic impact of over 8 billion dollars and generated 233,322 jobs. Here in Florida, 130,900 jobs and 23 billion dollars in economic impact drives a lot of industry. This one closure of the American red snapper fishery could cause the loss of a large portion of this revenue as well as the loss of as many as 40,000 recreational fishing-related jobs.

Again, this loss would be the result of nothing more than an error in the way these populations are determined. And what you heard echoes the congressional mandate to fix this broken system before more damage is done. Yet beyond all evidence to the contrary and the belief of all observing, NOAA fisheries continues to rush foolishly headlong into more and more onerous rulemaking and closing several fisheries to all sportsman every month. They do this under the false assumption that Magnuson - Stevens mandates them to act upon the best science available. The bitter irony, of course is that critically examining the best science available points to its disposal, never mind its use to establish any sort of baseline for stock recovery.

Madam Chairman, we the saltwater recreational anglers of the United States are completely exasperated and exhausted in our efforts to bring our very legitimate concerns

of this inequity to NOAA. We have been dismissed, condescended to and ignored.

As the Gentleman from Alaska remarked, Magnuson - Stevens was conceived as a defense against foreign interests exploiting our domestic fisheries. It is a crime that now; 30 years later that same document is being used to throttle those same domestic interests to the point of collapse.

Madam Chairman, we hope your heard what we have been shouting loudly for years. We ask you and your committee to forward our concerns to congress and to immediately stop all further rulemaking until credible, defensible scientific evidence demands action be taken.

For the Fishing Rights Alliance and the saltwater anglers of the United States, thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Dennis O'Hern

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