

The Honorable Wayne T. Gilchrest  
The Honorable Sam Farr  
The Honorable Roscoe G. Bartlett  
The Honorable James P. Moran  
The Honorable Christopher Shays  
The Honorable Adam B. Schiff  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

May 16, 2006

Dear Representatives Gilchrest, Farr, Bartlett, Moran, Shays and Schiff:

Thank you for your letter of May 4 regarding bills in House of Representatives to reauthorize the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). We greatly appreciate your continuing commitment to improving our nation's management of its fisheries, which is vitally important to the health of our economy and our oceans.

The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative is committed to a set of fundamental principles that are articulated in both Commission reports and that we believe should ground all ocean policy reform (see enclosed statement of principles). These principles, many of which are reflected in your legislation, H.R. 5051, promote an ecosystem-based management approach, a stronger reliance on the science, greater participation and support of fishermen and the general public, an enhanced stewardship ethic, and adequate funding to support fishery management and recovery. Effective fisheries management legislation should incorporate all of these principles.

The Joint Ocean Commission Initiative strongly urges the Congress to pass MSA reauthorizing legislation this year and commends the Resources Committee's publicly stated commitment to this goal. We understand that the reauthorization process is scheduled to take another step forward when the Committee marks up H.R. 5018 on May 17.

Your letter requests that we provide a comparative assessment of the various House MSA reauthorization bills and how well they reflect the principles articulated by the Joint Initiative, as well as a position statement on H.R. 5051. While JOCI does not have the staff or resources to provide the comprehensive analysis requested prior to the scheduled mark up, we can provide the following information and support for the reauthorization process.

First, enclosed is a copy of a letter sent to Chairman Pombo that highlights provisions of H.R. 5018 supported by the Joint Initiative, as well as suggestions for strengthening some of the bill's provisions. We hope that this information will be useful during Committee deliberation of proposed amendments to the bill during mark up. Also attached, as mentioned above, is the statement of principles endorsed by the Joint Initiative. We are hopeful that the final MSA reauthorization bill will address most, if not all, of these principles.

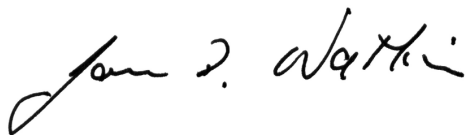
The Joint Initiative recognizes that H.R. 5051 incorporates a number of provisions beyond those included in H.R. 5018 that we endorse and would support their inclusion in a House-passed bill. These include:

- Strengthening credentials and clarifying conflict of interest requirements for members of Science and Statistical Councils
- Addressing the need to compensate for overfishing by limiting harvest levels the subsequent year
- Greater encouragement and guidance to Regional Fisheries Management Councils to move toward ecosystem-based management and the development of fishery ecosystem plans
- A national commitment to improved and increased cooperative research and monitoring
- A measure to allow owners to withdraw fund from their Capital Construction Fund account in a manner that does not promote overcapitalization

In addition to the provisions identified above, the Joint Initiative recommends that the H.R. 5051 be strengthened by making council member training mandatory and predicating members' voting privileges on having completed the course within six months. We also suggest that the Committee consider setting a timeframe for the duration of Limited Access Privileges, a measure that would help avoid potential confusion regarding the public ownership of these resources as well as stimulate regular review of the programs and its goals and objectives.

While the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, as a general rule, issues public statements on bills that are being considered for floor action, we hope the above analysis is helpful and responsive to your requests. The Magnuson-Stevens Act is the cornerstone of our fisheries management regime, and its reauthorization is long overdue. We commend the sponsors of H.R. 5051, as well as Chairman Pombo, Representative Rahall, and Representative Frank, for your collective efforts to undertake reauthorization of this important law in the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress. We particularly appreciate your effort to incorporate the principles of the Joint Initiative as you drafted H.R. 5051. We look forward to the progress made by the Resources Committee during mark up, and the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative looks forward to working with you and your staff to produce a Magnuson-Stevens reauthorization act that fully embodies the principles of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative.

Sincerely,



James D. Watkins  
Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)  
Chairman, U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy



The Honorable Leon E. Panetta  
Chair, Pew Oceans Commission