

# American Fisheries Society Scientific Recommendations on Reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act



## Best Scientific Information Available

- The American Fisheries Society (AFS) strongly endorses continued reliance on Best Scientific Information Available Standard (BSIA), as a best practice in managing the nation's fisheries.
- AFS is concerned that data from self-reported sources (i.e. mobile technologies) are not sufficiently reliable to estimate catch without a valid sampling frame and should not be mandated in legislation.
- AFS supports the inclusion of citizen science into fisheries management and encourages the development of innovative survey sampling methods to enable collection of reliable and unbiased data from anglers.



## Catch Limits

- AFS believes science-based management is the cornerstone of fisheries management and recommends the continued separation of scientific and socioeconomic decision-making. AFS supports the requirement that the Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) must be less than the Overfishing Limit (OFL).
- AFS supports maintaining the Annual Catch Limit (ACL) requirement for recreational fisheries, but recommends a flexible approach to defining "Optimal Yield" in individual fisheries.
- Revisions to the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) should allow for adaptable and responsive management to account for new developments in science and management.
- AFS supports increased flexibility in MSA with regard to setting OFLs, ABCs, and ACLs for data-poor stocks.
- AFS urges innovative approaches to managing mixed-stock fisheries and encourages exploration of emerging technology to better manage for "choke" species.

## Rebuilding

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- Rebuilding timelines should be based on the biology of the stock.
- AFS supports adaptability and flexibility in transitioning into and out of a period of overfishing or rebuilding.
- AFS supports the call of the National Research Council to focus on management of exploitation rates in a rebuilding context rather than abundance (biomass).
- Using harvest control rules that have been simulation tested in a management strategy evaluation to reduce fishing mortality before a species becomes overfished could eliminate the need for rebuilding plans and could reduce the need for accountability measures.



## Habitat and Ecosystems

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- AFS recommends continued focus on habitat and Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management as ways of improving stability and value of the nation's fisheries.
- Clearer policy guidance regarding the objectives of EBFM is necessary for it to be more widely used.

## Adapting to Environmental Change

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- Precautionary catch limits and realistic rebuilding timeframes will be necessary to account for uncertainty and change in the climate and ecosystem.
- Future re-authorizations should focus on adaptability and flexibility to reflect the fact that fisheries productivity is changing.
- Resources must be directed to monitor and evaluate the effects of climate-related factors on population structure and biological rates and resulting information should be incorporated into stock assessments and scientific advice.
- AFS recommends active outreach by NMFS and the Councils to encourage fishermen to actively participate in data collection, assessment and management.



For more detailed information, please visit  
<http://fisheries.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/MSFCMA-Reauthorization-Final-1.pdf>