



NEWS RELEASE

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Sportfishing Community Applauds Legislation to Improve Federal Marine Fisheries Management System

Legislation introduces measures to address management deficiencies and prevent precipitous, massive fisheries closures

WASHINGTON, D.C. – July 15, 2010 – Today, Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.) introduced legislation designed to safeguard the strong conservation standards of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) while addressing a growing crisis within the federal marine fisheries management system. S.3594, the Fishery Conservation Transition Act (FCTA), will give federal marine fisheries managers the time, resources and more specific direction necessary to address the chronic deficiencies in data collection and science. Nowhere are these deficiencies more acute than in the South Atlantic where the lack of proper data exacerbated problems in the red snapper fishery and may ultimately result in a closure of all bottom fishing in a 5,000-square-mile area.

A coalition of marine recreational fishing, boating, and conservation organizations and businesses, including the **American Sportfishing Association (ASA)**, **The Billfish Foundation (TBF)**, the **Center for Coastal Conservation (Center)**, the **Coastal Conservation Association (CCA)**, the **Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF)**, the **International Game Fish Association (IGFA)** and the **National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA)** lauds the introduction of the FCTA and strongly supports the new bill. The coalition will continue to advocate with Members of Congress for their support of the bill and to seek additional sponsors.

While the Obama administration's outreach to the recreational fishing and conservation community has been encouraging, the need to address the current fisheries management crisis is urgent given 2010 and 2011 MSA deadlines. After working to find solutions outside the legislative arena to address the unintended consequences of the 2006 MSA reauthorization, the coalition has determined that a legislative remedy such as the FCTA is the only option given the lack of feasible solutions outside the legislative arena.

After the 2006 MSA reauthorization, it became apparent that NOAA Fisheries was ill-prepared to implement new provisions to end overfishing by 2010 and 2011 without resorting to abrupt and precipitous fishery closures. Throughout its history, NOAA Fisheries has virtually ignored the recreational fishing sector, its \$82 billion annual impact on the nation's economy, its support of 533,000 jobs and its critical contributions to marine resource conservation. Under the current administration, NOAA is taking steps to improve their understanding and appreciation of recreational fishing and the wide array of associated boating and fishing industries. The FCTA establishes a logical transition time for NOAA Fisheries to make

improvements to data collection that will lead to science-based management decisions instead of hasty closures by default.

FCTA has five key areas that will steer NOAA Fisheries back towards the true intentions of the overfishing amendments made to MSA in 2006. (See [FCTA Fact Sheet](#) for more details.)

- Filling gaps in MSA regarding multispecies fisheries by mandating specific conservation and science-based actions that would be taken in part to allow fishing for healthy stocks;
- Allowing reasonable time to transition to a new management framework that will deal more rationally and scientifically with rebuilding of stocks undergoing overfishing;
- Sharpening MSA economic assistance programs to insure funding is directed to those most affected by closures after carrying out full examination of who would be affected by closure;
- Requiring the agency to look at alternative fishery management measures to enhance the sustainability of an overfished stock and carry out more frequent stock assessments;
- Directing the agency, along with the National Academy of Science, to conduct a long-needed study on questions surrounding multispecies complexes and how all stocks in such a fishery can be managed for maximum yield.

Below are comments made today by the coalition's group leaders:

[American Sportfishing Association](#)

Mike Nussman, President and CEO

"The sportfishing industry applauds Senator Nelson's effort to re-inject balance and common-sense in our federal marine fisheries management system. The amendments in the Fishery Conservation Transition Act are a way to maintain and improve the conservation principles of the Magnuson-Stevens Act while addressing the current marine fisheries management crisis. NOAA Fisheries is being forced to make draconian fishing management decisions, such as the proposed closure on bottom fishing in large parts of the South Atlantic, based on inadequate data, including angler catch data, stock assessments and economic data. We support healthy fisheries and good fisheries management, but unnecessarily closing businesses and putting people out of work is unacceptable."

[The Billfish Foundation](#)

Ellen Peel, President

"Our sincere thanks goes to Sen. Bill Nelson of Florida -- the state with the most recreational fishing and boating constituents in the nation -- for introducing this important piece of legislation. The Fishery Conservation Transition Act provides a fair, rational and competent rebuilding of marine fish stocks while avoiding massive, abrupt and unnecessary closures of important recreational saltwater fisheries. Nelson is a leader who all in our recreational fishing and boating community should appreciate."

[Center for Coastal Conservation](#)

Jeff Angers, President

"This visionary legislation sets NOAA Fisheries on a path to ensure sound conservation of America's marine resources. It is the path Congress intended when it reauthorized MSA in 2006, and it is the path to the kind of management that our fishery resources deserve."

[Coastal Conservation Association](#)

Patrick Murray, President

"Recreational anglers have historically been the best conservationists and stewards of the resource. We need the federal government to recognize the value and importance of the angling community and for managers to take the necessary steps in data collection, stock assessments, and reallocation to implement the Magnuson-Stevens Act the way it was originally envisioned. We look forward to working with Sen. Nelson to begin building a new future for recreational anglers and our shared marine resources."

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Jeff Crane, President

"CSF and the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus are working on behalf of the 13 million saltwater anglers and the businesses and jobs that depend on them in this effort to properly implement the true objectives of the reauthorized 2006 Magnuson-Stevens Act. This legislation is intended to give federal marine fisheries managers the time and resources necessary to address the chronic deficiencies in data collection and science that are resulting in massive and abrupt closures of popular recreational saltwater fishing areas."

International Game Fish Association

Rob Kramer, President

"While it was our sincere hope that a solution to the current fisheries management crisis could be achieved without amending the Magnuson-Stevens Act, we are grateful for Sen. Bill Nelson's efforts to craft legislation that retains the important conservation provisions within the Act. It is time to give NOAA Fisheries the necessary tools to properly implement MSA in the manner in which it was originally envisioned by Congress in 2006."

National Marine Manufacturers Association

Thomas J. Dammrich, President

"Once again, Sen. Bill Nelson is offering common-sense, practical legislation that will help protect the great American tradition of boating and fishing while enhancing the ability for federal agencies to properly manage and conserve fisheries based on adequate and meaningful scientific data. Healthy and abundant fisheries and recreational access are the key to a strong boating and fishing industry, and we applaud Sen. Nelson for his leadership."