

Chairman Huffman’s Magnuson-Stevens Act Reauthorization “Listening Tour”

Provided by Dave Whaley, Council Consultant

On July 10, 2019, Congressman Huffman (D-California), Chair of the Water, Oceans, and Wildlife Subcommittee of the House Natural Resources Committee, announced that he “will hold a series of roundtable discussions throughout the United States to engage diverse perspectives, interests, and needs of individuals who have a stake in management of our ocean and fisheries resources.” The press release announcing these roundtable discussions noted that the Chairman “is committed to holding at least one public forum in each of the regions managed by Fishery Management Councils under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and to introducing a draft Magnuson-Stevens reauthorization bill, informed by this public process, by next Spring...Specific dates and locations will be announced soon so that stakeholders around the country can determine how best to participate in shaping next year’s Magnuson-Stevens reauthorization bill.”

According to the announcement, “Rep. Huffman’s goal for this listening tour is to assess whether improvements to the Magnuson-Stevens Act are needed and if so, what they should be. Topics covered in the roundtables will include, but are not limited to:

- Climate change impacts on fisheries and whether managers have the tools and resources they need to ensure resilient fish populations and stability to fishing communities;
- Challenges of modernizing and improving our data collection systems;
- Supporting working waterfronts, coastal communities, and subsistence fishing, such as improving the fisheries disaster relief system and mitigating the harmful impacts of trade wars and unfair, illegal fishing practices;
- Examining how current fisheries management practices are maintaining ecosystem roles and functions, protecting important habitats, and minimizing bycatch;
- Challenges associated with stocks that are still unhealthy or experiencing overfishing; and
- Ensuring equitable access to resources and a sustainable future for seafood.”

A link to the announcement and other information on the listening tour can be found at:

<https://huffman.house.gov/msa>

(Note: along with the links to videos of previous listening sessions, there is also a link for submitting public comment.)

Two public listening sessions have been held, the first in Arcata, California and the second in San Francisco, California.

Each of the sessions opened with a statement by Chairman Huffman, followed by five minute statements from each of the selected panelists. Following all of the statements, Chairman Huffman posed questions for the panelists to discuss and then questions from the audience were discussed by the Chairman and the panelists (questions were submitted in writing by audience members). Finally, each of the sessions ended with a short public comment period.

Arcata, California Listening Session – Saturday, October 5, 2019

(Note, I found an invitation to the event – after the fact – on eventbright.com)

A video of the session can be found at:

<https://huffman.house.gov/events/arcata-ca-listening-session>

Chairman Huffman’s opening statement at the Arcata listening session:

“...The Magnuson Act, I believe, doesn’t need to be reinvented completely. It’s been a very successful policy framework over the years. It’s really stood the test of time. And we can certainly see that the science and sustainability-based framework of Magnuson actually works when it is implemented properly. But we also know that it’s been a long time since Magnuson was reauthorized. And we do have some new challenges that we’re already starting to experience and some other challenges that we know are coming our way. So this is a chance as we think about how to build on the successes of Magnuson – which after all took us from a time when we had overfished a whole lot of stocks in this country ... and we’ve rebuilt so many of those stocks over time. So this is a chance to build on the success of that framework but also see if we can modernize it, fine tune it, and even make it better without undermining those elements that made it so successful over the years...”

Panelists:

- Marc Gorelnik, recreational angler, Vice Chair of the Pacific Fishery Management Council;
- Wayne Heikkila, Executive Director, Western Fishboat Owners’ Association;
- Laurie Richmond, Professor, Humboldt State University, Department of Environmental Science & Management;
- Harrison Ibach, President, Humboldt Fishermen’s Marketing Association;
- Jim Yarnall, recreational fisherman, member of the Pacific Council Salmon Advisory Subpanel;
- Dave Hillemeier, Fisheries Director, Yurok Tribe; and
- Dave Bitts, local fisherman – salmon and crab, outgoing president PCFFA.

San Francisco, California Listening Session - Monday, October 7, 2019

A video of the listening session can be found at:

<https://huffman.house.gov/events/san-francisco-ca-listening-session>

Chairman Huffman opening statement at the San Francisco listening session:

“...State of California, this is a great place to talk about the environmental, economic, and other issues that are so important when we talk about the Magnuson Act. To give quick background on what this listening tour is all about. What I’m trying to do, seven years into my service in the United States Congress and after having seen this issue that used to be so non-partisan – federal marine fisheries management – like so many things back in Washington kinda get hijacked to a lot of partisan bickering that we do. Instead of managing - sustainably managing marine fisheries - in recent years attempts to reauthorize Magnuson have devolved to partisan fights about the Antiquities Act and the Endangered Species Act and any number of other things that I think have sidetracked us from what what we really ought to be focusing on. I’m trying to reset that conversation a little bit and I thought a good way to do that would be to go around to every region that has a fishery management council and just do some listening – invite stakeholders to talk about what they think has worked with Magnuson, what they think could use improvement, and perhaps maybe we can take some of the politics out of it and reset the factual and scientific baseline so that we can have a better process at least and hopefully better politics and better outcome. As I think about and contemplate introducing a Magnuson reauthorization bill next Spring. So that’s really what this is all about. I intend to spend the next several months doing it and I want you to know that I start from the belief that we don’t have to reinvent the Magnuson Act. It’s not like it is fatally broken. In fact I think we have to start with the recognition that the Magnuson Act has been really successful. That the science-based, sustainable framework that it brought to what was a pretty dire situation when it came to our fisheries decades ago has really proven itself – science-based annual catch limits other important conservation and management standards in Magnuson have helped take us from a situation that involved a lot of overfishing and we’ve seen a record number of stocks that have been rebuilt including many here on the West Coast. I’m sure we’ll hear about some of those successes. So implemented correctly, I think the Magnuson Act is absolutely something that has been successful, that continues...can continue to be successful, but we also have to recognize it has been a long time since we have reauthorized Magnuson and some circumstances have changed. We have conditions that we’re starting to face that we know will be more challenging in the future whether its climate change, fisheries disasters, maintaining environmental and economic sustainability...and all of those have to be a part of this conversation about modernizing and fine-tuning – hopefully honoring the successful parts of Magnuson while making it even better. That is my goal....”

Panelists:

- Bob Dooley – Commercial Fisherman, Half Moon Bay, Member of the Pacific Council;
- Lisa Damrosch – Morning Star Fisheries/Half Moon Bay Groundfish Marketing Association;
- Sherry Flumerfelt – Executive Director, Monterey Bay Fisheries Trust;
- Kate Kauer – California Fisheries Program Director, The Nature Conservancy;
- Dr. Craig Shuman – Marine Region Manager, CA Department of Fish and Wildlife;
- Barbara Emley – Vice President, Institute for Fisheries Resources;
- Noah Oppenheim – Executive Director, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations;
- Christopher Wang – Commercial Fisherman, Chef, and owner of The Gypsy Fish Company;
- Irene Gutierrez - Senior Attorney, NRDC;
- Louie Zimm – Recreational saltwater angler; and
- Mike Conroy – Principal, West Coast Fisheries Consultants.

Next Steps:

At the end of the San Francisco listening session, Chairman Huffman noted that the next session would likely be held in either the Mid-Atlantic or New England region. No dates or locations were announced.