

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

- 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

- 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

- 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>