



SEABIRDS AND THE MAGNUSON- STEVENS FISHERY CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ACT



Least Tern

SCIENCE-BASED FISHERIES MANAGEMENT WORKS TO KEEP FISHERIES HEALTHY FOR MARINE WILDLIFE AND COMMUNITIES

The **Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act** (MSA) is the primary law that governs management of ocean fish in U.S. federal waters. Enacted in 1976, the MSA has been crucial in **improving the health of fish populations and ocean ecosystems**. Key objectives of the MSA are to prevent overfishing, rebuild overfished stocks, ensure healthy fisheries, increase long-term economic and social benefits, and guarantee safe and sustainable supplies of seafood.

The MSA has served as the nation's road map to sustainably managed fisheries. Through the MSA, the National Marine Fisheries Service has **ended chronic overfishing, rebuilt over 40 fish stocks, and put fisheries on a solid sustainable footing**. Despite these successes, *there is still more work to be done*.

THE NEXT MAGNUSON-STEVENS ACT REAUTHORIZATION:

The MSA was signed into law with strong bipartisan support. Republicans and Democrats **worked together** on reauthorizations in 1996 and 2006 that further strengthened the law. While reauthorizing the MSA, **Congress should further strengthen, not weaken, this law** in order to protect U.S. fisheries for the communities and wildlife that depend on healthy fish stocks. Important policy changes needed in the next MSA reauthorization include:

- **Empowering regional fishery management councils** to adopt a more comprehensive approach to protecting fish

- **Conserving forage fish** (sardines, anchovies, etc.) and invertebrates (krill, shrimp, and squid) which are the primary food sources for seabirds, marine mammals, and larger fish such as cod and tuna

- **Minimizing bycatch**, which is the incidental catching and discarding of non-target fish, birds, and other marine wildlife

- **Protecting fish habitat** from destructive fishing practices and some other other damaging human activities to ensure that fish have safe places to reproduce, feed, grow, and take shelter

- **Proceeding with caution** before

allowing new fisheries in order to ensure sustainability from the start

- **Creating fishery management plans** that use the best available scientific information to give regional managers a clear understanding of the trade-offs presented by different management options and to promote more informed decision-making

AT-RISK SEABIRDS ACROSS THE COUNTRY RELY ON THE MAGNUSON-STEVENS ACT TO RESPONSIBLY MANAGE FISHERIES

As a top predator in the ocean food web, seabirds are **valuable indicators** of marine health, and almost half of all seabird species are known or suspected to be experiencing population declines. Declines in many seabirds are linked to the **reduced prey populations**. The MSA designates and guides eight regional **fishery management councils** to manage many fish that are important prey for seabirds in federal waters out to 200-nautical miles offshore of the U.S.' coast called the **"Exclusive Economic Zone."**

In Alaska, the **North Pacific** Fishery Management Council safeguards favored prey for millions of seabirds, such as Capelin, Krill, and Sandlance. Marbled Murrelet's rely on these fish all year, but especially in the summer to ensure successful chick growth.



Atlantic Puffin

New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils manage prey critical to the Atlantic Puffin's survival, including Butterfish, Squid, Atlantic Herring, Haddock, Redfish, and White Hake. Additionally, the survival of puffin chicks is closely linked to the availability of Atlantic Herring.

The **South Atlantic** Fishery Management Council's shrimp fishery is important for many seabirds, including the globally endangered Bermuda and Black-capped Petrels.

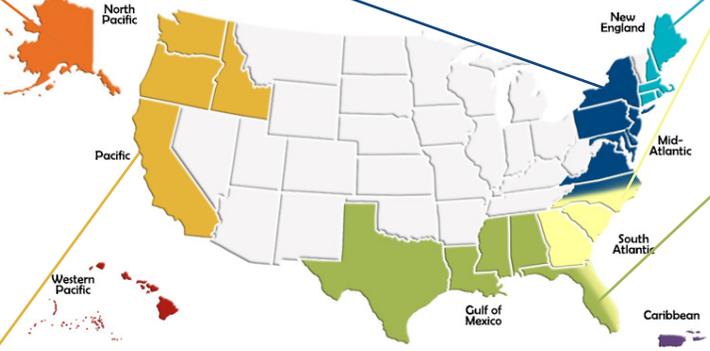


Brown Pelican

The **Pacific** Fishery Management Council protects the Arctic Tern's most frequent prey: Krill, Pacific Mackerel, Pacific Sandlance, and Pacific Herring.



Arctic Tern



Map of the eight regional fishery management councils across the US. Credit: NOAA

The **Gulf of Mexico** Fishery Management Council needs to safeguard over 20 species of unmanaged small fish species, including Anchovy, Menhaden, Sardines, and many others critical to Brown Pelicans, Magnificent Frigatebirds, and Sooty Terns.

THE MSA MATTERS ON A NATIONAL SCALE

As Americans who care about the future of our natural resources, we need to ensure that fishing goes hand in hand with **healthy oceans**, which provide more economic opportunities and prey for birds and other wildlife. If we strengthen the MSA today, we can **continue the U.S.' legacy of sustainable fishing** and will see many benefits to coastal communities and the nation.

By **ending overfishing** and **rebuilding stocks** through the MSA, we strengthen the value of U.S. fisheries. Robust fish populations attract anglers from all over the country to fish, stay at hotels, eat at restaurants, and make retail purchases in coastal areas. In 2014 alone, 11 million saltwater anglers took 68 million fishing trips generating nearly **\$61 billion** and supporting **439,000 U.S. jobs**.

Healthy fisheries promote **healthy coastal economies**. Wildlife viewers travel to coasts to see seabirds and marine mammals such as whales, and dolphins that rely on forage fish and invertebrates. There are **49 million** people that participate in wildlife viewing in coastal states, adding to a **\$28.9 billion** coastal tourism economy.

Many chefs, restaurant owners, and seafood dealers need a reliable source of **healthy, U.S. caught fish**, and the MSA ensures they can continue to serve high quality food. U.S. consumers drive the seafood industry, who, in 2016, spent an estimated **\$93 billion** on fishery products, including more than **\$63 billion** in restaurants and other food service establishments. Overall, the seafood industry provides **1.2 million jobs** and **\$144 billion** to the economy.

Strengthening the MSA will ensure there are enough fish to support coastal communities, now and in the future, while protecting the birds and other wildlife that depend on them.

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