



June 5, 2003

The Honorable Richard Cheney
President of the Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-0010

Dear Mr. President:

Enclosed are a draft bill entitled "Fishery Conservation and Management Amendments of 2003" and a section-by-section analysis of the proposed bill.

The major purposes of this draft legislation are twofold. First, to authorize appropriations for the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA), (16 U.S.C. § 1801 *et seq.*) through Fiscal Year 2007. Second, to amend the MSFCMA in a number of key areas, including the operations of the Regional Fishery Management Councils (Councils), timetables for the review and approval of fishery management plans, definitions of "overfishing" and "overfished," standards governing individual fishing quotas (IFQ), the collection of economic data, various fisheries law enforcement matters, fishing capacity reduction, and funding of fishery observer programs. Enactment of this proposal would strengthen the fishery management system, improve cooperation between NOAA Fisheries and the Councils, and pave the way for more effective programs to address overfishing and overcapacity.

The amendments to the MSFCMA included in this proposed legislation, particularly the proposals on the operations of the Councils and the review and approval timetables, will enable the Secretary of Commerce and the Councils to make more timely and effective decisions on a wide range of fishery management issues. The proposed distinction between the definitions of "overfishing" and "overfished," the new standards governing IFQs, and the streamlined rules for the fishing capacity reduction programs will help the Administration and Councils deal with rebuilding schedules for overfished fisheries and more effectively address overfishing and overcapacity, two fundamental problems in marine capture fisheries. The proposals relating to the collection of economic data, fisheries law enforcement, and the funding of observer programs will support and strengthen the entire fishery management process. These amendments do not propose any radical revisions of the U.S. fisheries regime, but will make the existing management system work better.

The Office of Management and Budget has advised that there is no objection to the submission of this proposal and that its enactment would be in accord with the program of the President.

Sincerely,

Theodore W. Kassinger

Enclosures

Identical Letters Sent To:

The Honorable Dennis Hastert
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515-6501

The Honorable Bill Frist
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-1601

The Honorable Thomas DeLay
House Majority Leader
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515-6503

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
House Minority Leader
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515-6502

The Honorable Thomas A. Daschle
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-7010

The Honorable Richard Pombo
Chairman, Committee on Resources
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515-6201

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall, II
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Resources
House of Representatives
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The Honorable John McCain
Chairman, Committee on Commerce, Science
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United States Senate
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The Honorable Ernest F. Hollings
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