

# COMMERCE NEWS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Friday, December 8, 2006

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## COMMERCE SECRETARY PRAISES PASSAGE OF MAGNUSON-STEVENSON ACT

**Maui, Hawaii** - U.S. Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez today praised the passage of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act. The act is the foremost bill that governs fishery management activities in federal waters.

“Today’s passage is a watershed day for those of us who believe in building healthy, sustainable fisheries and fishing communities,” said Gutierrez. “I want to thank Congress for their hard work and dedication in passing this important legislation and agreeing with the President’s call for a deadline to end overfishing. A robust fishing industry is vital to our continued economic growth.”

“I appreciate the leadership of Chairman Stevens and Chairman Pombo,” Gutierrez added. “I also truly value the partnership we have with Co-Chairman Inouye and Ranking Member Rahall, and thank them for all their efforts on behalf of the Department and NOAA.”

President Bush, through his Ocean Action Plan, made reauthorizing the Magnuson-Stevens Act a top priority. The President called for a hard deadline to end overfishing, increased use of market-based management tools, creation of a national saltwater angler registry, and an emphasis on ecosystem approaches to management.

“Today’s Congressional action supports the President’s Ocean Action Plan and is an important step towards an ecosystem approach to management,” said NOAA Under Secretary Conrad Lautenbacher, Ph.D.

The new bill will:

- establish a firm deadline to end overfishing;
- authorize the use of market-based limited access privilege programs;
- require establishment of a regionally based registry for recreational fishermen;
- strengthen fisheries enforcement;
- authorize the Secretary to provide assistance to the Regional Fishery Management Councils for development of regional ecosystem pilot programs; and

- establishes Community Based Restoration Programs that utilize public-private partnerships to restore fishery and coastal habitat, in line with the President's Cooperative Conservation Agenda.

"This legislation is an important step for the United States to continue our rebuilding efforts of the nation's fisheries," said Dr. Bill Hogarth, NOAA Fisheries Service Director. "This act will allow our fishers to utilize all of the tools that are available, so their fishing businesses can operate safely and economically."

In September 2005, the Administration provided Congress with a proposal to reauthorize the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The Administration's proposal addresses the challenges currently facing our federally-managed marine fishery resources and the communities that depend on them. The President's U.S. Ocean Action Plan was central in the development of the proposal. The views and concerns of stakeholders are also incorporated in the Administration's proposal.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act was first enacted into law in 1976 to govern fishing activities in federal waters and was amended in 1996. Most notably, the Magnuson-Stevens Act aided in the development of the domestic fishing industry by phasing out foreign fishing and it created the regional fishery management council system to govern fishing activities and conservation efforts.

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