



THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
Washington, D.C. 20230

September 20, 2005

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

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the Administration, we respectfully submit for Congressional consideration and action a bill "to authorize appropriations to the Secretary of Commerce [Secretary] for the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act [Act] for the fiscal years 2006 through 2010", and a detailed section-by-section analysis of the draft bill.

The Act was last reauthorized almost a decade ago in 1996 when Congress passed the Sustainable Fisheries Act amendments, and a thorough review and reauthorization of the Act is needed to update and, in some cases, redirect some of its major provisions. Congress has shown significant interest in these issues, calling numerous hearings on various fisheries issues and mandating the preparation of an Ocean Commission report on all aspects of ocean policies, including fisheries. Late last year, in response to the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy's recommendations, the Administration issued the U.S. Ocean Action Plan, which outlines near-term and longer-term actions to protect our oceans and marine resources. Included in the U.S. Ocean Action Plan are the Administration's views on the major issues related to fisheries policy and the need for new fisheries management legislation.

The Administration's proposal to reauthorize the Act draws from the U.S. Ocean Action Plan, offering a bill that includes amendments addressing major substantive fisheries issues. The bill retains the basic structure of the current management system, including the Regional Fishery Management Councils (Councils), and is responsive to local needs, but refines and improves this system through amendments in the following areas: (1) fishery ecosystems; (2) market-based management; (3) scientific information and other data; (4) the role of the Secretary (NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service) in the management process; and (5) fisheries law enforcement. The Administration's proposals will encourage fishery management and regulations that are comprehensive, economically viable, based on sound and peer-reviewed science, founded on an improved working relationship between the Councils and the Secretary, and more effectively enforced.

The Administration looks forward to working with the Congress to enact this legislation. We have been advised by the Office of Management and Budget that there is no objection to the submission of this draft bill and that its enactment would be in accord with the program of the President.

Sincerely,

Carlos M. Gutierrez

Enclosures

Identical Letters Sent to:

The Honorable Dennis Hastert
Speaker of the House of
Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6501

The Honorable Bill Frist
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-1601

The Honorable Tom DeLay
House Majority Leader
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6503

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6502

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-7010

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

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall II
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Resources
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6201

The Honorable Ted Stevens
Chairman, Committee on Commerce,
Science and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-6125

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Co-Chair, Committee on Commerce,
Science and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-6125