

## The Forage Fish Conservation Act

# Bill to Conserve Forage Fish Will Promote Healthy Sportfish Populations

The sportfishing industry expressed its support for a new bill in Congress to ensure the smaller fish in the ocean that serve as the food source for most marine sportfish, known as forage fish, will be sustainably managed. Introduced by Reps. Debbie Dingell (D-Mich.), Brian Mast (R-Fla.), Matt Cartwright (D-Pa.), Fred Upton (R-Mich.), Billy Long (R-Mo.) and Jared Huffman (D-Calif.), the Forage Fish Conservation Act would require that the role forage fish play in the marine ecosystem be accounted for when federal fisheries managers set catch limits on them.

“Recognizing the important relationship between healthy forage fish populations and healthy sportfish populations, the recreational fishing community has long advocated for forage fish conservation,” said Mike Leonard, vice president of Government Affairs for the [American Sportfishing Association](#) (ASA). “We are grateful to Reps. Dingell and Mast



**The Forage Fish Conservation Act would require managers to consider impacts on the ecosystem when setting forage fish catch limits**

for their bipartisan commitment to marine fisheries conservation through the science-based forage fish measures included in the Forage Fish Conservation Act.”

In 2014, the Commission on Saltwater Recreational

Fisheries Management, chaired by Bass Pro Shops Founder and CEO Johnny Morris and Maverick Boats President Scott

Deal, [released a report](#) identifying key policy changes to the federal marine fisheries management system to benefit fisheries conservation and public access.

One of the six key recommendations of that report was improving management and conservation of forage fish.

“The Forage Fish Conservation Act is consistent with the Morris-Deal Commission’s recommendation, by incorporating important considerations for forage fish into the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act,” said Leonard. “Because these integral parts of the marine food web are becoming increasingly targeted for commercial exploitation, it is important that forage fish management accounts for their role in marine ecosystems.”

Forage fish provide food for nearly all recreationally important fish species, as well as seabirds and other marine life. Meanwhile, human demand for these nutrient-rich species continues to increase.

However, the Magnuson-Stevens Act is not currently designed to account for the unique role of forage fish in the marine ecosystem, instead relying on traditional single-species management approaches. The Forage Fish Conservation Act would require that the impacts on fish populations and the marine ecosystem be considered before allowing harvest on any currently unmanaged forage species, and that predator needs be accounted for in existing management plans for forage fish.

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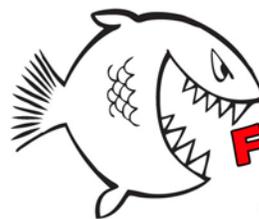
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