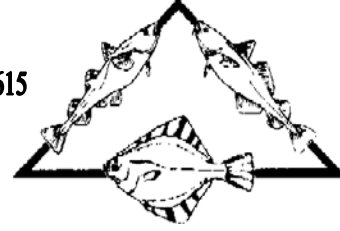


# Groundfish Data Bank

**Alaska**

PH: 907-486-3033 FAX: 907-486-3461 P.O. BOX 788 - KODIAK, AK. 99615

Julie Bonney, Executive Director jbonney@gci.net  
Katy McGauley, Fisheries Biologist agdb@gci.net



---

---

Witness Testimony by Julie Bonney

---

---

**Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation**  
**“Reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA): Oversight of Fisheries Management Successes and Challenges”**  
**Kenai Peninsula College, Soldotna, Alaska**  
**August 23, 2017**

Senator Sullivan,

Thank you for inviting me to testify on the reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA). My name is Julie Bonney and I am testifying on behalf of the trawl catcher vessels and shore-based processors who are members of Alaska Groundfish Data Bank (AGDB). For 40 years, the MSA has worked well for Alaska and for my home town, Kodiak – America’s second largest port by volume and the third largest by value. The Act and its ten National Standards in their current form appropriately guide council decision making. We do not support any changes or additions to the standards or any major changes to the Act.

The entire US fishing industry has benefited from flexibility of the Act. The North Pacific Council has solved many regional fishery management issues through its transparent, public and science based decision making process. The best and most creative solutions to management problems have typically come from fishery participants working with a council that understands and values the fisheries they regulate. Council make up is therefore a key component of successful fishery management. Councils should include diverse representation with fisheries expertise and backgrounds. Stakeholders from the spectrum of fishing communities, fishermen, and processors affected by the fisheries regulated by the Council should all be represented.

It is easy to name examples of management programs developed under the Act that benefit communities across Alaska. The community quota entity program and the allocation of fixed gear cod licenses were developed by representatives of small rural communities in the Gulf of Alaska. The highly successful Community Development Quota program benefits coastal communities in the Bering Sea. Regional delivery requirements were developed to keep rockfish coming across the docks in Kodiak and crab coming across the docks in the Pribilof Islands.

In Alaska, we have had benefited from catch share programs in several of our fisheries. These programs have greatly improved fisheries data, helping our Alaskan fleets to self-fund over 50 percent of the Nation's observer days. Alaska Groundfish Data Bank presently manages seven shorebased harvesting cooperatives in the Central Gulf of Alaska rockfish fishery. That catch share program stopped the race for fish, brought community benefits to Kodiak, reduced bycatch, increased harvest efficiencies and increased fishery monitoring. Our catch share fishery has enjoyed eleven successful years. We agree with the Council Coordination Committee that catch share management needs to remain in the Councils' tool box. Catch share programs are certainly not appropriate for every fishery, so the discretionary nature of catch share management makes sense.

A major theme of the August 1<sup>st</sup> MSA hearing was sustainably increasing wild harvests from our fisheries to provide greater benefits to the Nation. My members believe that the fishing industry can achieve this goal. However, care needs to be taken to make sure that the flexibility is not used to erode conservation objectives. Flexibility to address rebuilding time lines for overfished stocks, to allow harvests of choke species that impede harvests of other fish stocks, and relaxed management measures for data poor stocks are some of the concepts being promoted. NMFS revised the national standard one guidelines just last year to provide tools to increase flexibility in rebuilding plans, better define ecosystem component species, and phase-in changes to catch levels. Whether these new flexibilities strike the right balance should be evaluated before amending the Act.

AGDB members are well versed on the highly controversial, complicated and polarizing topic of fisheries bycatch. All fisheries have bycatch; it is unavoidable. Regulating bycatch is important for equity and conservation, but we need to distinguish actions that achieve conservation objectives from those that are largely allocative. Actions that provide little or no benefit to stocks or competing fisheries but reduce net benefits to the Nation, prevent achieving optimum yield, or increases costs to fishing fleets should be avoided.

The 2006 reauthorization of the MSA was an endorsement of the "Alaska model". Some small tweaks may be necessary for other regions during this reauthorization process but in general, it is working well in Alaska.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I will be happy to answer any questions.

Julie Bonney  
Executive Director,  
Alaska Groundfish Data Bank, Inc.  
PO Box 788  
Kodiak AK 99615