

## **LETTER FROM CAPTAIN MARK BROWN – SOUTH CAROLINA ON BEHALF OF THOUSANDS OF FISHERMEN BOTH COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL**

**From:** [Capt. Mark Brown](#)

**Sent:** Thursday, February 17, 2011 10:46 AM

**To:** [evening@cbsnews.com](mailto:evening@cbsnews.com)

**Subject:** Fishery Management

To Whom It May Concern,

The segment that Miss Couric did last evening was right on the money Kudos to CBS and its staff for getting it right! The fishermen of this country have been in a fight for their livelihood for over three years now ever since a specific event took place in January of 2007.

There is a law that governs all of the fisheries in this nation it is called the “Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act” or MSA for short. This law is mandated to be re-authorized every ten years from its original inception in 1976.

Over the years fishery managers have tried to work with the fishermen in different parts of the U.S. to develop regulations and management that would not only coincide with this act but also would have a common sense approach to keeping a sustainable fishery.

Commercial fishermen are the farmers of the sea and they want their renewable crops of the sea to be sustainable (more so than anyone else) and to continue to grow so they will be able to harvest again and again year after year just like the farmer.

Environmental and conservation organizations over the years have become a powerful driving force in politics and the media. They have influenced law makers to make decisions based off of suggestive ideas and backdoor donations that have hurt many different industries and businesses in our land.

I am not saying that management is not good, fishermen do want management! It keeps the clock turning and gives fishermen hope for the future, but what has happened now through a chain of events is a situation that has put a noose around the fishing communities neck and is tightening at a rapid pace now and economic fallout is starting to show and will eventually wipe out the entire nations only source of valuable fresh protein if something is not done soon.

What I am referring to is the MSA was scheduled for re-authorization in 2006. During that year a lot of things were starting to happen with the economy and the war that was making congress nervous, the re-authorization of the act was tossed around on capitol hill like a soccer ball. It was re-written and re-worded so many times that senators and congressman didn't noticed wording added to it that would eventually become a strangle hold on the entire fishing industry.

The environmental and conservation community along with their lobbyist were able to slip wording into the re-authorized law that best suited their agenda and law makers passed it in December of 2006 right before the end of that session.

Lobbyist for the Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) <http://www.joinrfa.org/> saw this coming and tried their best at the eleventh hour running across Capitol Hill to try and stop this from happening, but it was too late. The re-authorization bill passed with unanimous consent without even a roll call vote!

This was done because of retiring senator Ted Stevens from Alaska.

No one on the high seas had any idea of what had taken place. They were too busy working trying to make a living to worry about what the government was doing. This ended up not being a conservation law but an economic weapon of mass destruction with a slow fuse which is now burning faster. It is now the death grip plaguing the fishing industry.

It is affecting ALL fishermen not only commercial but recreational too!

With added wording to the act that now requires NOAA and regulators at the National Marine Fisheries Service to develop management in a shorter time frame based off of the "Best Available Science" when there is no science for a large majority of our fisheries, it is creating havoc and shut downs of harvest of perfectly healthy and sustainable fisheries b/c of the mandates and very restrictive time lines of this broken (MSA) law.

Because it is an overarching policy regardless of use it affects everyone the same recreational and commercial.

To make matters worse input from the fishing community has not been accepted. This has drawn angry crowds and public outcry against these agencies who then reply that it is not their fault but is required to take these actions by law.

This is what prompted the large rally February 25, 2010 where approximately 5000 fishermen rallied together on Capitol Hill to demand changes to the law and has also prompted numerous lawsuits by the fishermen around the country.

Because of all of this fishermen across our country are up in arms about the current mismanagement of our nation's fisheries that is being forced down our throats like bad medicine.

I have been in the fishing business my entire life as was my father (God Rest His Soul) and I have never seen anything quite like this. We the fishing community of this land are not only fighting overzealous law enforcement regulators with a fines happy agency, but at the core of this mess is a law (MSA) that was re-authorized and has now created a monster and blemished the historical relationship and working mechanics of interaction

between users of the resource and law makers to keep the flow of management truly sustainable.

The regulations being created on an almost daily basis now are so restrictive that even the law makers such as Dr. Roy Crabtree regional director of the National Marine Southeast Division has said in open meetings that the law is hurting everyone and needs to be changed.

Even the scientists are saying now that there is not enough sound fishery data to base good and conscious decision making. So to wrap up, what we have now is law enforcement agencies such as NOAA and NMFS charged with the duties of creating regulations and handing down management based off of a national governing law created by congress that has absolutely no flexibility built in to the (very restrictive) time frame for evaluating scientific evidence of a fishery for creating sustainable regulations to support the industry.

It's a sad day when people who want to work and have been working hard their whole lives are told they cannot!

Sincerely,

Captain Mark Brown  
Mount Pleasant, SC  
(843) 568-5966

Economic Value of Saltwater Fishing Nationally in 2006 (according to National Marine Fisheries Service- NMFS) (before MSA reauthorization!)

- Recreational:
  - 13.6 million recreational anglers
  - 87 million recreational saltwater fishing trips
  - \$5.8B on these trips
  - \$25.6B on durable fishing-related equipment
  - Over 500,000 jobs
- Commercial (harvesters, wholesalers, distributors, processors, dealers and retailers):
  - \$103B in sales

- \$44.3B in income
- Over 1.5 million jobs

#### Sources

United States Department of Commerce, Fisheries Economics of the United States 2006-  
Economics and Sociocultural Status and Trends Series, 2009,  
[http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st5/publication/econ/EconomicsReport\\_ALL.pdf](http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st5/publication/econ/EconomicsReport_ALL.pdf)

National Marine Fisheries Service, Fisheries Economics of the U.S. 2006: South Atlantic Region  
Summary and Tables, 2009, [http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st5/publication/econ/SA\\_ALL\\_Econ.pdf](http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st5/publication/econ/SA_ALL_Econ.pdf)

United States Fish and Wildlife Service, 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-  
Associated Recreation, 2009, [http://library.fws.gov/pubs/nat\\_survey2006\\_final.pdf](http://library.fws.gov/pubs/nat_survey2006_final.pdf)