

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 8598

To amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to ensure representation for all fishery user groups on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 30, 2026

Mr. BEGICH introduced the following bill; which was referred to the
Committee on Natural Resources

A BILL

To amend the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to ensure representation for all fishery user groups on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “North Pacific Fishery
5 Management Council Representation Enhancement Act of
6 2026”.

7 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

8 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) The North Pacific Fishery Management
2 Council, established under section 302(a)(1)(G) of
3 the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and
4 Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1852(a)(1)(G)), plays a
5 critical role in managing fisheries in the Arctic
6 Ocean, Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands, and Gulf of
7 Alaska seaward of Alaska, where diverse user
8 groups—including recreational (sport) fishers, non-
9 industrial commercial fishers, rural subsistence
10 users, and urban subsistence users—depend on sus-
11 tainable fishery resources.

12 (2) Current council composition, while requiring
13 fair and balanced apportionment under section
14 302(b)(2)(B) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Con-
15 servation and Management Act (16 U.S.C.
16 1852(b)(2)(B)), does not mandate minimum rep-
17 resentation for those specific user groups, leading to
18 potential underrepresentation of recreational, non-in-
19 dustrial commercial, and subsistence interests amid
20 dominance by large-scale commercial sectors.

21 (3) Subsistence fishing is vital to Alaska’s cul-
22 tural, economic, and food security needs, with rural
23 residents harvesting an estimated 36.9 million
24 pounds of wild foods annually and urban residents

1 contributing to an additional 13.4 million pounds
2 through personal use and subsistence activities.

3 (4) Non-industrial commercial fishing, often in-
4 volving owner-operated vessels under 160 feet, sup-
5 ports local economies and differs significantly from
6 industrial operations, warranting dedicated represen-
7 tation.

8 (5) Recreational fishing, including sport and
9 charter operations, contributes to tourism and com-
10 munity livelihoods but lacks guaranteed voice in
11 council decisions.

12 (6) Ensuring minimum appointments for these
13 groups will promote balanced management, address
14 ongoing criticisms of bias toward large-scale com-
15 mercial interests, and align with the goals of the
16 Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Man-
17 agement Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.) of conserva-
18 tion, sustainability, and stakeholder inclusion-driven
19 policymaking.

20 **SEC. 3. NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**
21 **REPRESENTATION.**

22 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery
23 Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1801 et
24 seq.) is amended—

25 (1) in section 3 (16 U.S.C. 1802)—

1 (A) by redesignating paragraphs (31)
2 through (50) as paragraphs (32) through (51),
3 respectively;

4 (B) by inserting after paragraph (30) the
5 following:

6 “(31) The term ‘non-industrial commercial fish-
7 ing interest’ means a person that is or represents
8 the interests of a commercial fishing operation
9 that—

10 “(A) is owner-operated;

11 “(B) utilizes only vessels less than 160 feet
12 in length; and

13 “(C) is not a participant in large-scale in-
14 dustrial seafood harvesting or processing.”;

15 (C) by redesignating paragraphs (39)
16 through (51), as so redesignated, as paragraphs
17 (40) through (52), respectively;

18 (D) by inserting after paragraph (38), as
19 so redesignated, the following:

20 “(39) The term ‘recreational fishing interest’
21 means a person that is a participant in, or rep-
22 resents a person that is a participant in, recreational
23 fishing activities conducted for noncommercial pur-
24 poses, including sport fishing, charter fishing, and
25 guided fishing.”;

1 (E) by redesignating paragraphs (41)
2 through (52), as so redesignated, as paragraphs
3 (42) through (53), respectively;

4 (F) by inserting after paragraph (40), as
5 so redesignated, the following:

6 “(41) The term ‘rural subsistence user group’
7 means a person that represents residents of rural
8 areas in Alaska who rely on the noncommercial har-
9 vest of fish for purposes such as food, cultural prac-
10 tices, or sharing.”;

11 (G) by redesignating paragraphs (51)
12 through (53), as so redesignated, as paragraphs
13 (52) through (54); and

14 (H) by inserting after paragraph (50), as
15 so redesignated, the following:

16 “(51) The term ‘urban subsistence user group’
17 means a person that represents residents of areas in
18 Alaska that are not rural areas who rely on the non-
19 commercial harvest of fish for purposes such as
20 food, cultural practices, or sharing.”; and

21 (2) in section 302 (16 U.S.C. 1852)—

22 (A) in subsection (a)(1)(G), by adding
23 “The 5 voting members of the North Pacific
24 Council appointed by the Secretary in accord-
25 ance with subsection (b)(2) from the State of

1 Alaska shall include at least 1 representative of
2 each of a non-industrial commercial fishing in-
3 terest, recreational fishing interest, rural sub-
4 sistence user group, and urban subsistence user
5 group.” at the end; and

6 (B) in subsection (b)(2), by adding at the
7 end the following:

8 “(F) REQUIREMENT FOR LISTS SUBMITTED BY GOV-
9 ERNOR OF ALASKA.—With respect to each list of individ-
10 uals submitted by the Governor of Alaska for appointment
11 to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under
12 subparagraph (C), the Governor shall indicate whether an
13 individual included in the list is a representative of a non-
14 industrial commercial fishing interest, recreational fishing
15 interest, rural subsistence user group, or urban subsist-
16 ence user group.”.

17 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by
18 this section shall apply to appointments to the North Pa-
19 cific Fishery Management Council established by section
20 302(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation
21 and Management Act (16 U.S.C. 1852(a)) made on or
22 after the date that is 1 year after the date of the enact-
23 ment of this section.

○