

May 2, 2019

**Statement of the National Marine Manufacturers Association to the Subcommittee on
Water, Oceans, and Wildlife, U.S. House of Representatives, on the State of Fisheries**

Written Testimony for Nicole Vasilaros, National Marine Manufacturers Association

Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member McClintock, and distinguished members of the committee:

The National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) offers this testimony regarding the State of Fisheries, the topic of your subcommittee hearing on May 1, 2019. The NMMA thanks you for holding this important hearing on the current state of our fisheries and looks forward to working with your committee to ensure we have clean water, abundant fisheries, and sound management.

The NMMA is the largest trade association for the U.S. recreational boating industry, representing nearly 1,300 marine business including recreational boat, marine engine, and accessory manufacturers. NMMA members manufacture more than 80 percent of the recreational marine products used in the United States. Recreational boating is an important contributor to the US economy, generating \$170 billion annually and supporting nearly 700,000 jobs and 35,000 businesses.

For nearly seventy years, recreational boaters and anglers have served as the backbone for aquatic conservation. Recreational boaters and anglers pay federal excise taxes on fishing equipment and motorboat fuel and purchase fishing licenses—all of which directly funds fisheries conservation and habitat restoration through the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund. The recreational boating and fishing communities understand that having clean water and healthy fisheries has a direct impact on the number of boaters and anglers. The more boaters and anglers purchasing motorboat fuel and fishing equipment means more funds for aquatic conservation.

With more than 70 percent of all boat outings involving fishing, the recreational boating industry is working to ensure that our fisheries and waters are healthy and sustainable. Despite the significant impact the recreational boating industry has on the economy, the federal fisheries management system continues to focus on the commercial industry. While recreational anglers only catch two percent of the total saltwater fish, recreational saltwater anglers contributed three times more to our country's gross domestic product than those caught by commercial anglers.

For these reasons, we are grateful for the committee's work to ensure the Modern Fish Act became law last year—which was the most sweeping reform of federal recreational saltwater

fisheries management. This new law responsibly expands recreational fishing opportunities through enhanced marine fishery conservation and management. Further, this law will provide this country's recreational anglers and boaters reasonable and responsible access to public marine resource. The passage of this bill is a big step toward implementing science-based methods and improved data collection techniques for saltwater fishing decision-making. We look forward to working with the committee to ensuring this law is fully implemented.

While the passage of the Modern Fish Act was a much-needed step in the right direction to improve and enhance our federal fisheries management system, much work remains in ensuring healthy and abundant fisheries. For example, recreational boaters and anglers in the Mid-Atlantic have seen the amount of summer flounder—a prized fish that helps support many local economies—drastically reduced in recent years.

Furthermore, forage fish—which are a critical food source for recreationally and commercially important species—serve an integral part in supporting the marine ecosystems and economies, including recreational boating and fishing. Many of these forage fish populations are at historic lows, due in large part to the lack of protections within the federal fisheries management system. Thankfully, Representative Debbie Dingell and Representative Brian Mast have introduced bipartisan legislation that would help strengthen these protections, improve the management of forage fish, and help ensure enough of these fish remain in the water. The bill—H.R.2236, the Forage Fish Conservation Act—is currently before your committee, and we would greatly appreciate your consideration and swift approval.

Again, thank you for your continued interest in and support of recreational fishing and boating. The NMMA looks forward to continuing to work with the committee on ways to improve the health and abundance of our country's fisheries, and we stand ready to assist your committee as you consider ways to improve our waters, fisheries, and management systems.