MAGNUSON-STEVENS ACT REAUTHORIZATION - GILCHREST
INTRODUCES BILL SIGNIFICANTLY AMENDING NATION'S FISHERY LAW: Maryland Congressman Wayne Gilchrest today, 10 March, introduced a measure, the Fisheries Recovery Act, to amend and reauthorize the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation & Management Act. The bill was announced on Thursday by Gilchrest and the Marine Fish Conservation Network at a Washington press conference. The legislation is intended to further strengthen the nation's main fishery law.
The new bill amends the Magnuson-Stevens Act by:

* Making bycatch reduction a priority. Would require the regional fishery councils to develop an accurate bycatch reporting system and establish bycatch reduction quotas.

* Improving protection of essential fish habitat (EFH). Would require the regional councils to ensure new fishing gear or practices will not adversely affect EFH.

* Reforming the regional fishery councils. Would require broader council membership to ensure a balance of commercial and recreational fishing and conservation interests.

* Establishing a mandatory observer program in each fishery. Would require the collection of reliable data from observations of catches at-sea necessary for fishery management.

* Conserving marine ecosystems. Would require regional councils to develop comprehensive fisheries ecosystem plans to cover major fisheries in each region.

* Ensuring application of precautionary fisheries management. Would require the regional councils to prepare fishery management plans that err on the side of conservation absent reliable fisheries data.

The announcement of the bill came on the same day the House Resources Committee held a hearing on Magnuson-Stevens...
>reauthorization; the Senate has already held a series of
>hearings in the field. Among those testifying at the House hearing was
>Paul Pelligrini, a Eureka fisherman and president of the Humboldt
>Fishermen's Marketing Association. For more information on the
>Thursday House hearing or the Fisheries Recovery Act, contact the
>Marine Fish Conservation Network at: mfcn@mindspring.com.
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>A summary of PCFFA's Magnuson-Stevens Act testimony submitted at
>the Senate hearing in Seattle appeared in the February issue of
>Fishermen's News. It can also be viewed on PCFFA's website at:
>http://www.pond.net/~pcffa. Also posted is the testimony by Paul
>Pelligrini on the EFH portions of SFA.
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>WORLD'S LARGEST FISHING TRAWLER LAUNCHED: As
>fishing nations throughout the world attempt to cope with many
>overfished stocks and excess fishing capacity, the F/V Atlantic Dawn
>was
>launched at a shipyard in Kristiansund, Norway on 12 February for its
>Irish owners, reports the U.K. journal, Fishing News (18 February
>issue).
The new vessel is 114.6 meters in length, and 13,5000 gross tonnage, making her the world's largest factory trawler. Atlantic Dawn is
rigged
>for both stern trawling and purse seining and is owned by Atlantic
>Dawn,
>Ltd.
>
>In the same issue of Fishing News, is an article by Derek McIver, a
>member of the Highlands & Islands Fishermen's Association, writing "that
>quotas are not protecting stocks as intended, but instead are passing the
>rights to catch fish from public to private hands, squeezing out small boat
>fishermen and destroying stocks." McIver argues in his article, "Greed
>Has Taken Over," (p.8) that "more money can be made by speculators leasing quota to fishermen than can be made by the fishermen." For more
>information from the 18 February issue of Fishing News, visit the publication's website at: http://www.fishingnews.co.uk.
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>FRANKENFISH IS UPON US: On Tuesday, 7 March, Elliot Entis,
president of Aqua Bounty, a leading company in the field of genetically engineered seafood, said his firm will begin selling the first genetically
>modified (GMO) salmon eggs to fish farms worldwide by late spring or
>early summer. Entis' comments were made during an exclusive interview with Dan McGovern of Fishmonger News Network at the International
>Boston Seafood Show. According to Entis, Aqua Bounty's genetically altered fish have a growth rate of up to 600 percent higher than their non-transgenic cousins and can reach harvest size in about 16-18 months compared with a typical grow-out period of three years. For more
>
The news about Aqua Bounty's sale of the genetically modified salmon
>eggs, follows on the report of 26 February that New Zealand King Salmon
Co. Ltd., agreeing to dispose of all of its genetically engineered king salmon that could grow three times faster than natural chinooks and potentially reach a size of 550 pounds. In response to the 6 March Time magazine article, "Make Way For Frankenfish," (pp.62-63), California State Senator Tom Hayden on 3 March wrote a letter to the Director of the State's Department of Fish & Game, "requesting a brief snapshot of what, if anything, the Department is doing to evaluate and regulate the environmental consequences of this technological revolution...." Hayden went on saying, "Concern for corporate profit, or the theory that bigger is always better, should not supercede the need for research, and regulation on issues that will affect the fate of species for the rest of time."

For a copy of the Senator's letter, call his office at: (916) 445-1353.

AFS CALIFORNIA-NEVADA CHAPTER ANNUAL MEETING SET FOR VENTURA: "Sierra to the Pacific: Fishery Management and Restoration in the New Millennium" is the title for the symposium and 34th Annual Meeting of the California-Nevada Chapter of the American Fisheries Society (AFS). The meeting will include sessions on essential marine and freshwater habitats, current marine research, and nearshore fisheries. 30 March - 1 April at the Holiday Inn in Ventura. For more information, contact Elise Holland, Cal-Neva Chapter President-elect at: Elise.Holland@tpl.org

CORPS OF ENGINEERS ISSUES FIVE NEW NATIONWIDE PERMITS FOR WETLAND FILLING: On 9 March the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers published in the Federal Register its long overdue five new Nationwide Permits (NWPs) for filling wetlands. With an estimated 85 percent of the nation's commercially valuable fish being wetland dependent during some part of their life, the issuance of these new and modified permits (six are modified under the notice) has implications for the fishing industry. The new permits now have an upper limit of « acre compared to the three acres of fill that was allowed in the previous permits the new and modified ones replace. For more information on the NWP notice in the Federal Register, go to: http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/a000309c.html. An excellent critique of the program was prepared by David Ortman; he can be reached at: deom@jps.net.

DAM BUSTING - SNAKE RIVER NAMED NATION'S MOST ENDANGERED RIVER: At a 9 March Washington press conference, American Rivers' released its report on the nation's most endangered rivers, with the Columbia tributary, the Snake River, at the top. Controversy is currently surrounding the fate of the river with scientists, as well as fishing and conservation groups, who support removal of four dams on the lower Snake. Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber and New Mexico Congressman Tom Udall are also proponents of breaching the
>dams to save the salmon. On the other hand, the Governors of Montana
>and Idaho, bowing to agribusiness interests, and Washington Governor
>Gary Locke and Texas Governor George W. Bush, siding with irrigators
>and subsidized tug and barge operators, have weighed in against
>removing
>the dams to save the salmon.
>
>According to recent economic studies, dam removal on the lower
>Snake is less costly than other options for salmon recovery, such as
>new
>restrictions on farming, logging, and commercial fishing. Measures such
>as acquiring water from Idaho irrigators to speed migration of fish to the
>sea and revamping the dams to comply with the Clean Water Act would
>cost more than $500 million annually and eliminate more than 4,000
>jobs.
The Clinton Administration is legally obligated to decide this year
>whether to remove the four dams as part of its Columbia River salmon
>recovery plan. For a copy of the American Rivers report on endangered
>rivers, visit: http://www.amrivers.org.
>
>While the Snake River dams are getting most attention, Environmental
>News Service reported on 6 March that the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
>is quietly moving ahead with a program to dismantle or alter some of the
>75,000 smaller dams and water obstructions in waterways across the
>country. This year the agency has $900,000 to expend for fish passage
>projects in seven watersheds in 12 states, removing four dams and other
>impediments and restoring access to more than 1,000 miles of habitat
>for
>fish. Last year, the program completed restoration projects in 14
>states
>where some 23,000 acres of riparian, streambank and wetland habitats
>were restored and 1,000 miles of river were improved or reopened to
>spawning and rearing habitat. In 2001, the program target is to
>restore
>32,000 acres of wetland and riparian habitat and another 1,000 miles
>of stream habitat. For those interested, the 7 March issue of the San
Jose
>Mercury-News, carried a comprehensive article on dam removal, "To
Help Save Fish, Officials Consider Razing Some Dams," by Karen Levy.
To review the Levy article on dam removal, visit the Mercury-News
website at:
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>ONE-STOP FISHERIES SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL COMING OUT
>THIS MONTH: Blackwell Science has announced it will begin
>publication this month of a new journal Fish and Fisheries. According to
>the publisher, its is a "peer-reviewed journal focusing on topics of major
>importance internationally within the area of fish biology, fisheries and
>aquaculture, bringing together subjects including physiology, behaviour,
>ecology, genetics and evolution of fishes, conservation and exploitation."
>For information on this quarterly, visit Blackwell Science's website at:
CALIFORNIA VOTERS PASS BILLION DOLLAR BOND ACTS

THAT COULD HELP FISH: On 7 March, California voters passed two billion dollar plus bond acts that each provide funding to help restore fish habitat and rebuild fish stocks. Proposition 12, the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air & Coastal Protection Bond Act, provides a billion dollars to, among other things, habitat restoration and coastal protection (including funds for the State's Coastal Conservancy). Information on Proposition 12 can be found at: http://www.safeparks.org.

The other measure passed was the $1.97 billion Safe Drinking Water, Clean Water, Watershed Protection & Flood Protection Bond Act. This measure is intended to, among other things, protect wetlands and other natural habitats, and increase groundwater storage, water conservation, and water reuse. More information on Proposition 13 can be found at: http://www.prop13.org.

PCFFA has been supportive of increased funding of fish recovery and fish habitat protection, including necessary in-stream and in-Delta water flows and improved fish passage. The concern, however, it had with Proposition 13 (although it supported the bond act), is much the same as it has had with increased federal money for salmon restoration in coastal watersheds, in the Columbia and in the San Francisco Bay and Sacramento/San Joaquin Delta. Money alone will not solve the fish problems, according to PCFFA. Proposition 13 may not do much to make California's water supply more dependable or help the fish absent some long-overdue changes to California water law, including statutes mandating statewide groundwater management and growth planning around available water supplies, argues the federation. In the Columbia basin, billions have been expended for salmon recovery but there has been little success due to the failure of the federal government to change dam operations. The same fear holds true for California where millions are being spent to restore salmon habitat in coastal watersheds, but the restoration is likely to be short term and of little value absent a change in California's forest practice rules. The issue of just throwing money at a problem without corresponding reforms in law or strong enforcement of existing laws was raised by IFR's Molly Thomas speaking on the announcement of the Gilchrest Fisheries Recovery Act, on Thursday.

"Fish don't swim in money!," remarked Thomas. "Sure more funds are needed for restoration and research and to provide immediate relief for some fishing families, but the money won't do much good unless its accompanied by change and reform. That's why the Gilchrest bill is so important. That's why strong enforcement of the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act is so important."

SAGA OF F/V AMERICAN MONARCH IN SIBERIAN WATERS

IN LATEST RUSSIAN FISH JOURNAL: The latest issue of The Northern Pacific Journal, the Russian fishery publication, features an
PACIFIC FISHERY COUNCIL APPROVES SALMON SEASON OPTIONS FOR 2000: At its 6-10 March meeting in Sacramento, the Pacific Fishery Management Council adopted options to submit for public review for management this season of the ocean salmon commercial and recreational fishery offshore California, Oregon and Washington. Following public hearings on the options, the PFMC will select at its April meeting in Portland a final recommended season to submit for approval to the Department of Commerce. For more information, visit the Pacific Council’s website at: http://www.pcouncil.org.

In other salmon news, the provincial government of British Columbia announced on 2 March it is dropping its $235 million lawsuit against the U.S. for violating the Pacific Salmon Treaty. The lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court in Seattle by former Premier Glen Clark, accusing the U.S. of overfishing and failing to meet treaty requirements for sharing and conserving salmon stocks. The case was dismissed by the U.S. District Court, holding that British Columbia lacked standing. The province subsequently appealed the district court decision. "We have decided to spend no more money in court and attempt to use this decision as a symbol of our intent to try to enter a more cooperative regime," said B.C. Fisheries Minister Corky Evans, announcing the decision to drop the appeal.

FUND RAISING BEGINS FOR LAWSUIT TO ENFORCE CALIFORNIA COASTAL ACT AND PROTECT FISHING VESSEL ANCHORAGE: PCFFA has begun a fund raising drive to support the lawsuit it has brought against the California Coastal Commission, PCFFA v. California Coastal Commission, over the approval of four abalone mariculture operations in the middle of a busy and crowded anchorage at Pillar Point Harbor, near Half Moon Bay, California. The California Coastal Act states that commercial fishing is a coastal dependent use and commercial fishing facilities within the coastal zone shall be protected and, where feasible, upgraded. The PCFFA contends the Commission violated its own act when it permitted in July the placement of the abalone "farms" in the anchorage. Space for an estimated 40 to 70 fishing vessels will be lost. The Pillar Point Harbor is used by salmon and albacore vessels from up and down the Pacific Coast, with its anchorage often filled with fishing boats during the spring and fall of the year. PCFFA is represented in this lawsuit by Oakland environmental attorney, Mary Hudson. Persons wishing to contribute can do so by making checks payable to: PCFFA Legal Defense (mark on them Pillar Point Anchorage
CANADIANS WARNED THAT FISHING LICENSES COULD SOON END UP IN NON-FISHERMEN HANDS: At a meeting this week in Ottawa of the second General Assembly of the Canadian Council of Professional Fish Harvesters, Vancouver Island salmon troller Guy Johnson told the delegates that Canadian fishing licenses will soon be owned by men in business suits instead of fishermen unless changes are made to Canada's fisheries laws. Delegates to the convention were given the example of the Pacific herring roe fishery where 70 percent of the landed value this year of the fish will be eaten up by license-leasing fees paid to non-fishermen.

"By allowing investors and speculators to buy-up licenses and rent them back to working fishermen, the government is draining money out of coastal communities," said Johnson. "By undermining owner-operators, the present license holders don't have a long-term stake in the fishery. All they [speculators] are interested in is getting as large a return on their investment as quickly as possible."

Earle McCurdy of Newfoundland's Fish Food & Allied Workers, who was elected for a second term as president of the Council, said the demographics of the fishery are such that a majority of fishermen will be retiring over the next 15 years. He said with the existing loopholes in Canadian law, those licenses could easily end up in the hands of fish processing companies or speculators with no attachment to the fishing industry. For more information, contact the Canadian Council of Professional Fish Harvesters at their e-mail address: ccfh@fox.nstn.ca.

GOT NEWS?: Submit news items to Molly Thomas, editor at: ifrfish@aol.com or call the IFR office with the news and a source at either: (415) 561-FISH (Southwest Office) or (541) 689-2000 (Northwest Office).

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