



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

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Joseph Cimino (NJ), Chair

Dan McKiernan (MA), Vice-Chair

Robert E. Beal, Executive Director

Sustainable and Cooperative Management of Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

August 20, 2024

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz
167 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Cruz,

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) is pleased to endorse S. 4113, the State Boating Act. The State Boating Act would grant flexibility to the states to continue collecting fees critical to recreational fishing access and ecology restoration programs.

The Commission is a Compact of the 15 Atlantic coastal states that manages nearshore marine fisheries which occupy multiple states' waters. The Commission manages 27 of the coast's most productive and iconic fisheries, nine of which are cooperatively managed with our federal partners. While inland Fish and Game agencies are often represented by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), another supporter of this bill, many marine fisheries agencies find their voice through the Commission.

Some Atlantic coast states had been directed by their legislatures to collect registration fees for boat access, aquatic invasive species (AIS), and boating safety programs. Recently, the US Coast Guard has blocked the collection of these fees. Our states are concerned that without the ability to collect these reasonable fees, they will be unable to adequately fund programs critical to providing quality recreational fishing and boating opportunities to the public. S. 4113 provides a simple fix for this problem.

States are also struggling to respond to aquatic invasive species. As an example, in 2023 the State of Maryland asked the National Marine Fisheries Service to declare a fisheries disaster for invasive blue catfish in the Chesapeake Bay (Bay). It is likely that blue catfish are having a negative impact to the Bay ecosystem in particular on iconic native species such as striped bass and blue crabs. That disaster declaration was denied, but the state still has a need for funding to mount a response to this invasive species. Fees like the ones being blocked would help them do so.

The Commission believes that S. 4113 is a straightforward fix to a problem blocking a state's right to effectively manage its natural resources, and to create a safer environment for recreational participants. I hope you will join us in supporting this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. E. Beal".

L24-064