

Mr. DELAHUNT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, for some of us the conservation of a threatened species such as striped bass is more than a legislative priority. Last weekend I took part in the annual striped bass tournament on Martha's Vineyard, in my congressional district. I was led by some exceptionally talented surf casters to Lobsterville Beach, where we fished for stripers until midnight.

As for results, let us just say I did not win the tournament. In fact, let us just say I did not land a single fish. My partners concluded that this must be part of my own personal plan to help save striped bass.

We can achieve this important objective, however, without doing it one fish at a time. I rise today in support of legislation which will help ensure the continued health of striped bass stocks from Maine to South Carolina, and hopefully will increase my own chances for the next tournament on Martha's Vineyard, or anywhere, for that matter.

When my predecessor, Gerry Studds, first introduced the Striped Bass Conservation Act in 1984, the species had been battered by pollution and overfishing. Harvests had plummeted so far, so fast, by over 10 million pounds over the preceding 10 years, that there was legitimate fear that the future of the species was clearly in danger.

If the problem was clear, the solution was not. The striped bass are highly migratory and move primarily along the 3-mile coastal zone which is under the combined jurisdictions of 12 States and the District of Columbia. Balancing the needs of the fish, the fishermen, and regulators, Congressman Studds and his colleagues created a unique and, as it turned out, highly effective scheme to bolster State management efforts to restore the stock.

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By all measures, the results of this cooperation among the States and between the State and Federal Government has been astonishingly successful. Today the fish are found in record numbers up and down the coast, and all the people involved are still talking courteously to each other.

The Federal-State partnership embodied in the Striped Bass Act has restored the species to its former considerable glory as one of the most important sport and commercial fisheries on the east coast. We have demonstrated to fishermen and fisheries managers alike that conservation, if properly conceived and sensibly executed, can work.

H.R. 1658 will ensure that we stay the course that has nursed this fishery back to health and that, given enough time, encouragement and good bait, even Members of Congress might one day experience the thrill of hooking one of these spectacular fish.

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Speaker, today we are considering H.R. 1658, the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act Amendments of 1997.

I have stood here many times to speak about striped bass and the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act. In fact, I represent many Atlantic striped bass. Young stripers live the first part of their lives in the Delaware River, at one end of the third district of New Jersey. When they grow up, they inhabit the bays, inlets, and coastal waters at the other end of the district.

My other constituents who are recreational fishermen consider striped bass one of the premier saltwater game fish on the east coast. They support a large industry of charter boats, bait, and tackle shops, and other businesses, not only in New Jersey but all along the Atlantic coast. In other east coast States, striped bass also support a significant commercial fishery.

The larger importance of striped bass is that they nearly disappeared 20 years ago. In the late 1970's, heavy fishing pressure and inconsistent State management policies coincided with pollution and other environmental factors to cause a serious population crash. This devastated the commercial fishery and nearly wiped out the species as a game fish. Congress responded by enacting the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act, which enforced a single management plan throughout all the east coast States. This allowed fisheries managers to take the action that was needed to end overfishing and restore the population.

Over the last 13 years, this program has succeeded beyond any expectations. In 1984, the outlook for striped bass was bleak. Now, they are as abundant as they have ever been. Striped bass are one of the few true success stories in fisheries management, and stand as an example of how conservative, forward-looking management can bring an irreplaceable resource back from disaster.

H.R. 1658 would continue this successful program. It updates the objectives of the Striped Bass Act to reflect the current state of the fishery. It makes technical corrections to increase consistency with the Atlantic States Cooperative Fisheries Management Act, which governs other coastal fisheries. It increases public input into striped bass management plans. Most important, it reauthorizes the annual striped bass study. This study started in 1980 and provides the information that fisheries managers need to make good management decisions.

Without these studies, the restoration program would have been much less successful. Likewise, a shortage of information will compromise future management efforts. We need the best information possible to protect the gains that we have made. Only a commitment to careful study and conservative management can ensure that striped bass will remain a livelihood for commercial fishermen, a thrill for anglers, and a common sight in east coast waters well into the future.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will continue an extremely successful program. I urge you and all other members to support it.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in support of the Striped Bass Conservation Act Amendments, and I compliment the author of the bill, JIM SAXTON, for his continued efforts to move this legislation.

The Atlantic coast stock of striped bass are found in waters from North Carolina to Maine. They are highly migratory but move primarily along the coast within the 3-mile zone, which is subject to State fishery management.

While striped bass populations have fluctuated dramatically in the past, the population suffered a drastic decline in the 1970's. Striped bass harvests plummeted from 15 million pounds in 1973 to 3.5 million pounds in 1983.

In response to this serious problem, Congress approved an emergency striped bass study and the Atlantic Striped Bass Conservation Act of 1984. This law requires all affected coastal States to implement management measures to conserve and protect Atlantic striped bass stocks.

After 15 years of careful management, the striped bass population has fully recovered to pre-decline levels. This is a major fishery management success. H.R. 1658 will ensure that this remarkable recovery is not compromised in the days ahead.

As reported by the Resources Committee, this legislation reauthorizes the study provisions of the Striped Bass Act and related laws, makes technical changes to increase consistency with other fishery conservation laws, and encourages greater public participation in the writing of management plans.

Mr. Speaker, I hope more of our fishery management efforts prove to be this successful in the future. I urge an "aye" vote on H.R. 1658.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GOODLING). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. PETERSON] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1658, as amended.

The question was taken.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5 of rule I and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1658, the bill just considered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

CODIFYING LAWS RELATED TO TRANSPORTATION

Mr. MCCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1086) to codify without substantive change laws related to transportation and to improve the United States Code, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1086

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,