



Cosponsor—The Fishery Improvement to Streamline untimely regulatory Hurdles post Emergency Situation Act (FISHES Act)

Background:

- This bill seeks to improve the federal regulatory processes associated with fishery disaster relief funding within the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).
- After Congress appropriates fishery disaster relief funding, funding may be dispersed IF:
 - 1. NOAA approves the state-submitted spend plan; and
 - 2. OMB approves the state-submitted spend plan.
- Currently, OMB has no incentive to approve the spend plan because OMB has no deadline to approve.
 - Disaster funding process: Congress appropriates funds → Within 14 days, NOAA coordinates with OMB to determine allocation of funds → Within 120 days, State creates and submits spending plan to NOAA → Within 90 days, NOAA approves spend plan and submits to OMB for approval → OMB approves spend plan (but no timeline to do so) → State receives approval to spend funds in accordance with their approved spend plan.
- The State of Florida alone has requested fishery disaster declarations on six different occasions since 2012—however for each occasion, over two years+ had lapsed from the time of approval to when the fishery disaster relief funds were ultimately made available.
- States apply for federal fishery disaster relief for a variety of reasons, including day-to-day extreme weather; water quality issues; hurricanes; etc.
 - Fishery specific impacts include: (1) boats and dockage can be damaged or destroyed; (2) fishing equipment can be lost or destroyed; (3) commercial fishermen and charter captains can lose revenue if they can't host and operate fishing trips; (4) for charter businesses, hotel and restaurant infrastructure may be impacted thus dissuading clients from fishing in the impacted area; (5) fish wholesale dealers lose business; (6) water quality issues impact fish health due to high levels of salinity/HABs in the water.
- If the federal fishery disaster relief funding process is not modernized and streamlined, many fishing businesses and associated small businesses could go out of business before the relief is made available.

Specifics of the FISHES Act:

- This bill seeks to expedite the federal fishery disaster relief funding process by enacting a 30-day decision requirement for OMB to deny/approve the State's spend plan.



To cosponsor **the FISHES Act** or if you have any additional questions, please contact Chris Ploch at chris.ploch@mail.house.gov.