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Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation and the Environment of the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries on H.R. 1028 The Establishment of the "Interjurisdictional Fisheries Research Act of 1985" and H.R. 1025 Reauthorization of the "Anadromous Fish Conservation Act of 1965"

Herbert M. Austin

Virginia Institute of Marine Science

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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE
ON FISHERIES, AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
AND THE ENVIRONMENT
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON MERCHANT MARINE AND FISHERIES
ON
H.R. 1028
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE "INTERJURISDICTIONAL FISHERIES
RESEARCH ACT OF 1985"
AND
H.R. 1025
REAUTHORIZATION OF THE "ANADROMOUS FISH CONSERVATION ACT OF 1965"

BY

Dr. Herbert M. Austin
Head, Department of Fisheries Science
Virginia Institute of Marine Science
School of Marine Science
College of William and Mary
Gloucester Point, Virginia 23062

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Marine Resource Report #85-2

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. Herbert M. Austin. I am the Head of the Department of Fisheries Science at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science of the College of William and Mary. I appreciate the opportunity to speak this morning on the establishment of the "Interjurisdictional Fisheries Research Act of 1985" and reauthorization of the "Anadromous Fish Conservation Act" during fiscal years 1986, 1987, and 1988.

The Virginia Institute of Marine Science supports the establishment of the "Interjurisdictional Fisheries Research Act of 1985". Management of our living marine resources can only be successful when conducted by informed managers; and current management philosophy is predicated on support by the "best scientific information available". In many instances however, the best available is not sufficient to meet the immediate needs of management. Consequently, continued matching Federal support for state research in support of management of priority interjurisdictional fishery resources will insure that research will be of sufficient detail and of a timely nature such that State managers will have the best scientific information available.

Our interpretation of the Act is that funds would be project specific to a single interjurisdictional resource, a single stock or species, the striped bass or summer flounder, for example. Current practice by many states is to use Grant-in-Aid funds (PL 88-309) to support generic programs, in this case in Virginia our commercial landings statistics program that we have picked-up since its phase out in 1976 by the National Marine Fisheries Service. This potential restriction on its use, coupled with the loss of PL88-309 funds, would jeopardize Virginia's entire catch statistics program

which is not species specific, but very essential to management. Most of, but not all, of our resources are interjurisdictional. We would hope therefore that the proposed act would allow continued use in generic programs that support interjurisdictional fisheries.

A problem, generic to all state Grant-in-Aid program support, is the fiscal year time frame in which we must operate. The stocks do not recognize this, and with a Federal project start date of 1 October, and a biologically based project start date of, for example, 1 June (when the fish are spawning), we are confronted with a project termination date eight months out of phase, and behind, the Federal termination date. Consequently, we are always, on paper, late with the completion of any report. A mechanism to allow project start-up dates that coincide with the actual biological cycle would smooth Federal/State fiscal relationships.

Can a mechanism be developed for inclusion in SECTION 4, (a)(1) that takes into account lost volume and value of resources due to responsible reductions brought about by a management plan? Apportionment of funds, based for example on Virginia and Maryland's volume and value, after voluntary stringent striped bass catch reductions would reduce the appropriation to these states.

Our most important commercial and recreational fisheries are composed of species that are transitory. These include the menhaden, summer flounder, spot and croaker, shad and river herrings, blue crab, and striped bass. Even the "resident" striped bass spend most of the year in the jurisdiction of other states' waters.

Virginia passed, in 1984, legislation requiring the Virginia Marine Resources Commission to develop state Fishery Management Plans consistent with Federal and interstate management plans. The research and monitoring

effort required is significant and beyond current state funding potential. The National Marine Fisheries Service is currently extended to their personnel limit in the Fisheries Conservation Zone (FCZ). To further expand their research role into state waters would reduce their FCZ effectiveness. For example, under the current interstate FMP for striped bass, the states must draw heavily upon Federal scientific expertise to operate the plan and management the fishery. We wish to develop our own expertise and not have to rely on Federal scientists.

We are pleased that you have offered this Bill and feel it will improve the quality of our fishery management plans, interstate management cooperation, and will foster improved communication between fishery scientist and manager.

We also wish to go on record in support of a separate and independent reauthorization of PL89-304, The Anadromous fish Conservation Act for fiscal years 1986, 1987, and 1988. Reauthorization of PL89-304 and passage of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Research Act of 1985 will provide a strong mechanism for continued state informed participation in interstate fisheries management.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.