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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
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COMMITTEE ON  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
WATER, OCEANS, AND WILDLIFE – CHAIR  
ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES  
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS  
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION  
AND INFRASTRUCTURE  
HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT  
RAILROADS, PIPELINES, AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS  
WATER RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT  
SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE  
CLIMATE CRISIS

April 29, 2022

The Honorable Matt Cartwright  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cartwright and Ranking Member Aderholt:

Within the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies bill, I respectfully request funding for a much-needed coastwide fishery-independent assessment of Pacific rock fishes over rocky habitat. No such assessment has ever been conducted. As you know, maintaining healthy fisheries depends on timely data and up-to-date science.

According to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), recent copper and quillback rockfish assessments suggest that fishing in nearshore waters will harm those stocks. In order to protect copper and quillback rockfish, there will likely have to be significant constraints placed on commercial and sport groundfish fisheries off California beginning in 2023, which would impact those whose livelihood depend on these fisheries.

Given the economic and social value of these fisheries and the seriousness of these closures on fishing communities, it is critical that we ensure managers have the highest quality data possible upon which to base these decisions. Fishery-independent surveys exist for stocks targeted by commercial trawl fisheries. There is no less need for such surveys for the distinct stocks targeted by recreational and non-trawl commercial fisheries.

To that end, I respectfully request the inclusion of the following report language within the line item for NMFS Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys, and Assessments:

*Report Language: Fishery-Independent Stock Assessment of Rock Fish Species in Non-Trawl Fisheries – Pacific rock fishes inhabiting rocky habitat are an indispensable*

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component of recreational and non-trawl commercial fisheries on the west coast. However, fishery-independent surveys of these stocks are excluded from existing coastwide trawl surveys because they are generally inaccessible to trawl gear. This leads to less reliable stock assessments, increased management uncertainty and significant loss of opportunity to recreational and non-trawl commercial fisheries. Regular fishery-independent data collection and analysis will improve the quality and reliability of stock assessments, prevent overfishing, and reduce management uncertainty. Assessments conducted in 2021 relying only on limited fishery-dependent data streams for these species will result in large closures in California fisheries in 2023 and 2024 and significant harm to coastal communities. The Committee provides \$5,000,000 to the Northwest Fisheries Science Center to conduct a coastwide fishery-independent assessments of rock fishes over rocky habitat beginning in California.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jared Huffman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**JARED HUFFMAN**  
Member of Congress