



## FIFTY TWO REASONS NOAA MUST CONDUCT FISHERIES STOCK ASSESSMENTS IN THE SOUTHEASTERN UNITED STATES ©

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"Science will set us free," has been a rallying cry for Southeastern Fisheries Association (SFA) and other commercial and recreational organizations from Texas through North Carolina for several decades. It continues to be a passionate rallying cry in 2013. Science is non-partisan. Fish are non-partisan. The private sector group of men and women who fight for equal protection under the law and more transparency in how our tax dollars are spent by NOAA are non-partisan.

**(Week # 6 of 52 weeks) "If you can't measure a fish stock, you can't manage it."**

Sixty-seven species of fish in federal waters are managed by data-poor science meaning they are managed poorly. Federal fishery managers are not impacted by their decisions that harm fishermen and fishing communities. They don't have to make payroll or worry about providing food, shelter and clothing and retirement income for their families. The fishing industry respects a bureaucracy composed of professionals who are "keepers of the flame." Stock assessments need to be performed by scientists not bound by "unwritten political policies", mandating a conclusion before the hypothesis has been determined and long before actual research and replication is performed using the scientific principle.

NOAA announced this week the hiring of Dr. Richard D. Methot, Jr., the **first ever NOAA Science Advisor for Stock Assessments**. Congratulations to Dr. Methot who has strong credentials as a scientist. Whether or not he will be able to listen to outside scientists, who are empiricists and approach stock assessments in a different light, remains to be seen.

If Dr. Methot seeks better methods to measure fish stocks and has adequate financial resources including cooperative research with the fishing industry, that will be a breath of fresh air. If he is shackled to toe the party line that all NOAA science is great and the only way to manage fish, then there will be no change to the status quo and the fishing industry will continue to be demonized. We fully recognize the political power of those who control NOAA grants. A NOAA fisheries cabal determines what science is funded, who performs it, how it is interpreted, which conclusions will be adopted and what new regulations are enacted to control federal fisheries. Not much transparency in the process.

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council meets this week in Mobile, Alabama amid drama reallocating more of the non-boaters reef fish to anglers, an effort led by the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA). Southeastern Fisheries is not opposed to discussing reallocation. We support non-boaters and restaurant customers having more fresh domestic fish reallocated to them. Maybe it is a good thing this controversial issue is before the Council. It will surely be elevated to Congress if the non-boating consumer's share of the fish is further reduced. As an example, Congress should request the General Accounting Office (GAO) to investigate NOAA's mismanagement of redfish in federal waters. This healthy, sustainable domestic redfish resource is off-limit to millions and millions of non-boating consumers, because we believe CCA and Texas control the redfish management process. There are more than enough redfish available in federal waters. A portion of the harvest should be used to feed people in restaurants and in their homes. Redfish is a local fish, a tasty fish and the stocks are as sustainable as they have ever been in our lifetime, but CCA controls the process and will not allow NOAA to manage it under the Magnuson Act. NOAA should not let a special interest group intimidate them any longer.

**"If you don't measure the redfish stock, you can't manage it."**

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