



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 commercial and recreational fishermen from Texas through North Carolina for several decades. It will continue to be a passionate, continuous 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 # 3 of 52 weeks) “If you can’t measure a fish stock, you can’t manage it.”

NOAA spends hundreds of millions of dollars annually on “stuff”. Much of the “stuff” is valuable, but a much bigger portion of NOAA funds should be used for gathering real time data through joint research projects conducted by scientists on the water. Stock assessments must be done in the geographical areas where funding for fisheries independent research and spawning aggregation measurement has been weak or non-existent.

The southeastern states, especially those in the South Atlantic Ocean from North Carolina to Key West, are penalized the most by lack of empirical data on the important fish stocks. The Gulf of Mexico also demands better and more accurate stock assessments.

There are billions of dollars being funneled to the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, through the US Department of Justice, under a recent decision by a federal judge. The money is available, or will be available, after the judicial hearing on January 29th in New Orleans, if those in charge of the money do not divert it to President Obama’s National Ocean Policy activities and other globalization initiatives being implemented through Presidential Executive orders.

The recreational and commercial fishing industries know the red snapper fishery on the east coast would be open if there was an honest stock assessment of the fishery. Stock assessments would allow the Councils and NOAA to have more leeway in setting the Total Allowable Catch. They would have empirical data providing more confidence in the science used to set quotas. The managers admit they have incomplete and flawed data. In order to compensate for the bad data, they reduce all harvest which harms the fishermen, the fishing industry and the communities where fishing occurs.

It would not take multi-millions of dollars to work cooperatively with the fishing industry to provide vessels for scientists to conduct research projects. The Councils and NOAA have been “managing” the federal fisheries since 1976 and still do not have some of the most basic scientific information on the stocks. Although we are very late in getting basic data for the fish stocks, we are not too late if those in charge of the money and policies have an epiphany and decide to do the right thing for the right reason.

It is difficult to change the direction of a federal agency when policies are in place with a predetermined goal of reducing fishing to the least possible level in the nation. Many ENGO’s believe this is the only way to have sustainable fisheries. That is not accurate.

The ONLY way to have sustainable fisheries is to determine the relative abundance of each stock of fish over a long time frame. This will not occur as long as NOAA refuses to conduct stock assessments. Sooner or later other groups will recognize.... **“If you can’t measure a fish stock, you can’t manage it.”**

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