



The Watch

Capt. Dave Monti, Chairman



The RISAA Legislative Committee’s mission is to provide, in partnership with the Affiliated Clubs, a forum for improving the knowledge and understanding of fishery-related and government issues that affect recreational anglers. An informed membership encourages involvement and advocacy. The Legislative Committee will strive to advocate responsible fishery decision.

The Committee is comprised of RISAA Members and delegates from the Affiliated Clubs. The Committee meets two or three times a year, depending on the number of fishery and/or legislative issues that develop.

The fish are losing their voice

It’s August, nine months into a forty-eight month presidency and the fish are losing their voice. With all that is going on in our country it seems odd to talk about the plight of the fish. However, it is important to note that by ignoring climate change and abusing resources such as fish the people in our nation will feel the impact well after the present administration is gone.

The fish are losing their voice because in past administrations (republican or democrat) it has been a matter of rebuilding fisheries and allowing them to grow to Maximum Sustainable Yield levels. However, that is not case now.

The administration and its appointees have engaged an agenda that focuses on whatever in the short term is economically expedient while battering our natural resources and environment in the process. People and the fish are and will continue to be hurt by this agenda and that is a tragedy.

Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) is the largest average catch that can be captured from a stock under existing environmental conditions. MSY aims to achieve a balance between too much and too little harvest to keep the population at some abundance level with a maximum replacement rate.

Rebuilding fisheries and aiming harvest at MSY is being ignored by some congressmen, senators and the Secretary of Commerce, Wilbur Ross. Some aim to put local interests first, allowing more fish to be taken for a short term economic gain. Rebuilding fish stocks and the long term health of our fishery, growing fish to abundance, is taking a back seat to the short term economic gains of a few.

The fish we take off New England, in the Gulf of Mexico, and off the coast of Alaska belong to those living in Wyoming and Missouri just as much as they belong to those living in New Jersey or on the coast of Louisiana. So, fisheries have and should be managed for the benefit of all, giving the fish priority so they grow to abundance for all.

Secretary Ross is responsible for managing our national

fisheries through the National Oceanographic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The Magnusson Stevens Act (MSA), the fishing law of our nation, gives fisheries management control to eight regional fisheries councils, with NOAA coordinating, supervising and implementing.

In some cases (like in the Northeast) a coastwide commission has been put in place. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) provides east coast management for migratory species that travel from one council’s geographic management area to another. So with some species (like striped bass, summer flounder, black sea bass and others on the east coast) it makes sense to manage fish coastwide.

Congressmen and senators in states that have long recognized the major economic impact of fishing in their local economy have advocated with the administration and Secretary Ross to allow more fish to be taken, for example New Jersey with summer flounder (fluke) and the Gulf of Mexico states with red snapper. They want to take more fish above research-based recommended harvest limits. Local interest groups including some fishermen, boat manufactures, fishing retailers and the tourism industry that rely on fishing want to take more fish to enhance economic gain to the detriment of the fish. And, some government leaders aim to take more

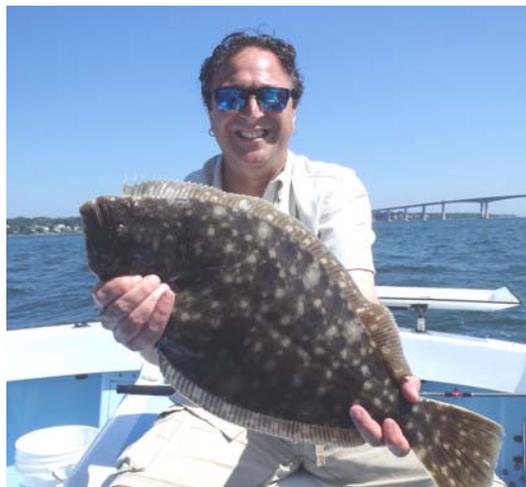
fish to satisfy political pressure put upon them by these and other interest groups.

Here are some examples of the fish losing their voice to a select few for short term economic gain in the past nine months.

Commission overruled by Secretary of Commerce

Last month Wilbur Ross, Secretary of Commerce, notified the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) that he has found the State of New Jersey to be in compliance with the new Summer Flounder Fishery Management Plan. The decision circumvented the work of the Commission that provides coastwide management of summer flounder (fluke) in our area.

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Steve Brustein of Portland, ME with a 23” summer flounder (fluke) caught last month north of the Jamestown Bridge in Narragansett Bay, RI