

WITEK: TOUGH LOVE (from page 9)

There is little mature conversation, no respect for people nor process, and a smug satisfaction derived from some combination of excessive ego and a childlike failure to admit their own ignorance.

Thus, instead of sitting down and trying to rationally work out the issues with tautog management, they start off the meeting by telling a top state biologist, who dedicated years to learning his trade, “We don’t care about your science. Your science is bullcrap.”

At which point the speaker’s cronies, like teenaged rowdies, all clapped and cheered.

So we go to meetings and waste too much time watching people perform for the crowd, posing at the end of their speech to bask in the hoots and applause of their pals. We endure personal attacks and name calling, when we should be sitting down together to work towards needed reforms. We’re forced to watch supposedly grown men acting like undisciplined children, and getting away with it for the same reason that kids do—to keep things sort of quiet, avoid outbursts of screaming, and minimize unpleasant scenes.

It’s difficult to deal with someone as an adult when they act like a two-year old—with colic. And if the folks at the front of the room fail to discourage such bad behavior when it first raises its head, it always tends to get worse.

We’ve reached a point where fisheries managers should stop tolerating such actions. We have a problem out on the water. Many fish are no longer there.

Here in New York, we’ve effectively lost our winter flounder. We’ve lost our spring mackerel run, and our winter whiting. Tautog are a shadow of what they once were, particularly in Long Island Sound. Most of the cod and pollock are gone; what’s considered good fishing today would have been a bad day just a few decades ago. Striped bass have been declared overfished; that hasn’t happened with fluke or bluefish yet, but both are sliding downhill. Weakfish might or might not be getting better, but are still pretty scarce. On the inshore grounds, the only thing left are porgies and sea bass; both are abundant, but it’s hard to support a business on just two species, and the odds and ends of whatever else might be around.

A regional angling publication, *The Fisherman* magazine, has created a sea robin category in its “Dream Boat” contest, which may be a better indication than anything else of how bad things really are.

If there was ever a time for the adults in the room to get serious about preserving the future, that time is now.

But instead, we hear the same tired rhetoric about the fish being fine, with no need for more rules.

It’s time for tough love.

It’s time for fishery managers to promote the interests of the fishing industry, by assuring that there will be sufficient fish to catch not just this year, but next year, and also next decade.

And if that means placing additional constraints on the fishery, and making fishermen responsible for everything they do, then that’s how it should—and must—be.

WARMEST OCEAN (from page 34)

Dr. Malin Pinsky of Rutgers University is a pioneer in using historical fishing trawl survey data collected by NOAA for years and looking at it differently. The data includes the fish caught in the trawl as well as latitudes, longitudes and the depths of each trawl. Once the historical fishing survey data base was built Dr. Pinsky and his team were able to pinpoint where fish populations were found—and if those locations changed over time. His work has been developed into an interactive application that can be found at

<http://oceanadapt.rutgers.edu>

It clearly shows movement of a variety of species in our region.

How can fishing laws be enhanced to reflect climate change?

“When Congress next changes the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, lawmakers should call for each council to create fishery ecosystem plans—road maps that can help managers understand the environmental factors that influence their fisheries so they can account for them and make more informed decisions,” said Morton.

Since Ted Morton wrote his article, Regional councils have begun to work on ecosystem-based management plans that



Lucy Churchill with a 24” summer flounder she caught off RI last summer. The fluke stock is in a slump coastwise, however, scientists say the biomass has moved north.

would take into account the impact of climate change, warming water and fish movement. However, plans have not developed fast enough and the planning and approach between councils is not consistent. Couple this with our federal administration not supporting evidence/science-based climate changes findings nor dedicating resources to address these findings, and all of it puts the people of this nation and fish at risk.

And, when it comes to the difficult issue of reallocation of quota between regions due to climate change and fish movement, our federal fishing law needs to be strong, as regions will often resist giving up quota they may have even though the fish are no longer in their area.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act is over 40 years old and has been updated several times. It is a good law, which has allowed many stocks to rebuild. However, when it is updated it needs to accelerate ecosystem-based management approaches reflecting climate change, warming water, fish movement and quota allocation.