

*Thoughts on SEDAR:
The Fishermen's View*

Thoughts on SEDAR

- **3 SEDAR Meetings**
 - Yellowtail, Lobster
 - Conch, Yellowfin Grouper
 - ACL Data
- **Fishermen Donated Time (7 meetings x 4 days x 9 Fishermen (3 StX, 3 StT, 3 PR)=252 Man Days.**
 - Despite this commitment, fisherman input is only given token attention.
- **Cost for 7 meetings x ~\$100K= ~\$700,000**
- **Council Advice for Management = 0**

- **National Standard Says “Conservation and management measures shall be based upon the best scientific information available.” 98-623(2)**
- **The data that are here are the best available. That has been clearly (and repeatedly) established. There is no manipulation of the data which is going to change that.**
- **There is no national standard that requires a specific analytical method. If SEDAR can't meet the requirement CFMC is using the wrong analysts.**

DATA SEDAR

- **None of the Data are sufficient for stock assessment as practiced by the SEFSC.**
- **Fishermen ask “Why have I been filling out these forms for the last 40 years?”**
- **SEFSC is not supplying direction.**
- **Lack of understanding of CFMC fisheries, cultures and economies by NMFS.**
 - E.g. Turner proposal for conch effort data.
 - Insistence on stock-specific catch reporting.
 - Expectation that all fisheries will fit models.

























SEFSC Stock Assessments Have Failed-Therefore:

- 1. Catch history only**
- 2. Index (biomass history) only**
- 3. Stage data only (length or age)**
- 4. Anecdotal data (informed judgement)**

**Using existing data and fisherman
input**

NMFS needs to "Man Up!"

- SEFSC has said "No" to current ACLG method but hasn't recommended a replacement.
- STFA is of the opinion that Fishermen Participation thus far is simple tokenism and that their input is being ignored.
- Some (slight) progress was being made through the St. Pete group.
- SEFSC has set back the progress by nearly 3 months.
- STFA will continue to oppose any unilateral ACL efforts and not be cornered by NMFS-created delays and illegal manipulation of CFMC membership.

Virgin Islands association resists NMFS' takeover

The following is excerpted from a letter to Jim Balsiger, NMFS' acting assistant administrator for fisheries.

Thank you for your response to our earlier communication about the Caribbean Fishery Management Council process for setting annual catch limits for our region. Your letter clearly documents NOAA Fisheries' interpretation of matters surrounding these issues and we understand why they chose to interpret events in this manner.

It does not, however, reflect our view regarding how this process is proceeding and only reinforces our feeling that we need to mobilize all aspects of the Virgin Islands community to actively oppose actions which we feel are nothing less than an attack on our culture.

First of all, it is our impression that NOAA Fisheries is attempting to override even the council's role in setting catch limits by attempting to force through values that only reflect their interpretation(s) of limited data sets. They are also committed to individual species ACL values for fisheries that include nearly 100 species instead of stock complex ACL values, which are allowed under Magnuson. Their insulting attack on the St. Thomas Fishermen's Association proposal, while polarizing our position, was unnecessary in that the ACL we proposed for the St. Thomas trap fishery was nearly exactly equal to a stock complex value derived from that same ACL group meeting results. For your information that proposal was discarded by deferring it for discussion at meetings which will not be held until after the catch limits are already determined.

As I mentioned, while we will

continue to be involved in the ACL process, we are not optimistic and are mobilizing community resistance to what can only be seen as fisheries colonialism. This resistance is being supported by our delegate to Congress, our governor, our Legislature and by the community at large, who are signing a petition of opposition.

Should the annual catch limit process continue as it is at present, we will

encourage our government not to agree to co-management actions and to revisit those which are already in place.

You can also count on active and forceful opposition at any hearings held in the Virgin Islands.

It is our recommendation that NOAA Fisheries staff involved in the Caribbean council ACL setting process be given specific direction that they should begin a receptive dialog that

respectfully includes stakeholder input and a cooperative effort to develop appropriate management actions based upon all available data. They should be specifically discouraged from their current feeling that they can dictate management in this region.

JIMMY MAGNER, President
JULIAN MAGRAS, Chairman of the St. Thomas Fishermen's Association
St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

COUNCIL UPDATES

News from the regional management councils

Caribbean

Members of the St. Thomas (U.S.V.I.) Fishermen's Association) have written Jim Balsiger, the acting director of NMFS, expressing their dissatisfaction with the way in which the Caribbean Fishery Management Council is setting annual catch limits.

Among their stated concerns:

- Management measures imposed during the re-authorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act have not been given time to work.
- Annual catch limits will "institutionalize" overfishing "while punishing St. Thomas/St. John fishermen for responsible fishing practices."
- There has been no discussion regarding impacts of effort reduction on the St. Thomas fishing community.
- A lack of willingness to consider other information such as recent size-frequency data which show large numbers of adult individuals, discard practices which protect pre-reproductive individuals and a license moratorium that is resulting in decreasing fishing effort.
- A lack of willingness to provide access to the data upon which decisions are being based.
- A lack of willingness to consider existing Virgin Islands management practices that might ameliorate fishing pressure.

Gulf of Mexico

NMFS is seeking public comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Amendment 29 to the fishery management plan for the reef fish resources of the Gulf of Mexico.

The impact statement evaluates the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council's proposal to reduce

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Delegated, VIRGIN ISLANDS

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August 19, 2008

Dr. James Balsiger
Acting Administrator for Fisheries
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1315 East West Highway
Building 3, Room 14636
Silver Springs, MD 20910

Dear Dr. Balsiger:

I am writing express some concerns about NOAA Fisheries actions to implement the Magnusan-Stevens reauthorization within the Caribbean Region.

I recently attended the 128th meeting of the Caribbean Fishery Management Council in St. Croix, USVI. I regularly attend Council meetings but, in this case, I felt it particularly important that I attend due to concerns expressed by local fishermen that NOAA Fisheries were apparently rushing to meet the MSA deadlines and were unwilling to consider local concerns.

As a Member of Congress, I supported the passage of the MSA Reauthorization. Additionally, I felt that the deadlines for ending overfishing reflected a necessary priority. Saying that, it was my belief and, I suspect that of the other Members, that NOAA Fisheries would employ its extensive technical and management skills to achieve not only timely, but also technically adequate management regimes that were sensitive to the actual situations on the ground. After attending the CFMC meeting, I am concerned that at least in the Caribbean Region that is not occurring.

