

Double standard

By CAPT. DAVID NELSON, GUEST EDITORIAL

- June 5, 2010 12:05 AM



**Capt. David Nelson**

Capt. David Nelson, of Port Orange, comes from a family that has been charter and commercial fishing the waters off Daytona Beach since 1954. He is also a teacher at Creekside Middle School.

If a whale gets a fishnet around its tail, environmental groups call for that type of fishing to be halted and it is stopped.

If a certain seabird is being negatively affected by some type of fishing activity, then that activity is also halted. If there's even a suspicion that loggerhead sea turtles are being killed by long-line fishing, then there is outrage and another law is enacted to stop this from happening. Environmental groups like the Pew Environmental Trust and Oceana are at the forefront of getting all fishing banned no matter if it is needed or not.

In the past 45 days there has been oil pouring into the Gulf of Mexico destroying countless mammals, birds, fish, and other animals in that ecosystem. This is the first major spill in this region in many years, but it is not the only spill. If a spill or leak is small enough, then oil companies are not required to report it. The companies then use chemical dispersants to make the oil sink to the bottom so that no one can see it.

Over time, it disperses deep under the ocean, doing untold damage to the sea creatures in the Gulf. This has been going on since the beginning of drilling in the Gulf without much being said. I am sure that all of this will be exposed in the near future because of this major spill.

Since January, red snapper in the Atlantic have been off-limits for fishermen. According to the very questionable science, the red snapper has been overfished for many years and fishing had to be stopped. The Pew Environmental Trust has been in the lead in making sure that this happens. Its power and influence in this area is widespread. The science that is the cause of the current shutdown of red snapper fishing is being redone because there were so many flaws in the data and models. Even with on-the-water accounts showing red snapper as healthy as they have been in 40 years, Pew continues to push for an end to all fishing for red snapper for up to 30 years.

In the Gulf of Mexico, the oil spill is going to do exponentially more damage to fish than any group of fishermen could do in a thousand years. Yet, Pew has only called for a moratorium on new drilling -- not a halt to pumping from existing wells in the Gulf, or any additional regulation of the thousands of miles of oil and natural-gas pipelines -- again, companies are not required to report "minor" leaks from these pipelines. If a fisherman hurts one animal like a whale or turtle, then environmentalists demand fishing must be stopped. This spill may destroy an entire ecosystem, and Pew will still not ask for all pumping to be halted.

Oil companies are given a pass by most environmental groups because the oil companies are some of their biggest financial contributors. Pew needs to be taken to task for the double standard.

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