

Who's really in charge of U.S. fisheries?
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An Oligarchy is defined as “a country, business, etc., that is controlled by a small group of people”

Ancient City Shrimp is an eight minute YouTube video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WepRokGO8d8>) produced by the St. Augustine Lighthouse Museum that examines St. Augustine's past as one of several centers of commercial shrimping in Florida.

Unfortunately – or perhaps tragically is a better fit – Florida's shrimp fleet is only a shadow of what it once was. One of the reasons for this is the imposition of unrealistic regulations on U.S. shrimpers that has made the fishery much less profitable than it used to be.

The video's producers don't really focus on this as one of the reasons for this decline, rather emphasizing the impacts of cheaper – and generally inferior – shrimp from abroad. This is understandable. You can only cover so much ground in a short video. Opening the can of worms that fishery regulation in the Southeast has become is a guarantee of complication and controversy, things which few museums would willingly get involved in.

In spite of a really good job overall I found part of the final narration troubling. Almost at the end (7 minutes and 50 seconds or so in) the narrator in his wrap-up states “**while we can't change federal regulations we can change our purchasing habits. Demand local shrimp** (my emphasis added).” He's on target with the “demand local shrimp” but it's hard to imagine anything more antithetical to the principles that our country was founded upon than his acceptance of the idea that we can't, or that we shouldn't, change federal regulations.

While it seems unlikely, apparently he missed out on any exposure to or consideration of the words “*government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the Earth.*”

As close to immortal as any words spoken in the last half a millennium, they are from Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. In a commemoration of the sacrifices of Union soldiers in the battle of Gettysburg, on November 19, 1863, President Lincoln expressed what governance in the United States was all about. To repeat those words, “*government of the people, by the people, for the people.*”

It kind of makes you wonder how the documentarians who put together *Ancient City Shrimp* became convinced that we (the people, I presume, as in the U.S. Citizenry) can't or shouldn't change federal regulations. One possibility is that they weren't aware that George Orwell's *1984* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* were works of fiction. Another would be that they have been exposed to the bottomless morass that federal fisheries management has been turned into.

A history lesson or two

Back in 1976 (this was before the existence of a multi-billion dollar environmental industry so thankfully they weren't there to impede the process) the Magnuson-Stevens Act became law. It brought fishing in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone under federal control and established a management regime that would eventually phase out virtually all foreign commercial fishing in U.S. waters.

It was generally agreed that one of the strongest features of the Act was the determination that fishermen were an integral part of the federal fishery management process. This was achieved by mandating that fishermen were voting members on each regional Fishery Management Council.

This was in recognition of a number of factors that the public, or at least the majority of the involved politicians and bureaucrats, have subsequently turned – or been turned - away from. Among these were the relative lack of knowledge of our fisheries and what affects them, the value to fisheries managers of the knowledge that has been accumulated by a multigenerational fishing industry over many years, and the belief in and the commitment of fishermen to the long term sustainability of the fisheries they participate in.

Since then a concerted and successful effort has been mounted to reduce the role that fishermen and other fishing industry members play in federal fisheries management. The role that they once had, and that Congress had intended them to have, has been taken over by fishery scientists. Unfortunately science's understanding of our living marine resources and their all-important relationships with a rapidly and radically changing marine environment has lagged far behind the management authority that scientists have been given. Most simply stated, they are now making multi-million dollar decisions based on woefully inadequate data and the system is bound to this ill-conceived strategy with no recourse when common sense argues compellingly against it.

These changes have been forced by a handful of ENGOs funded by several multi-billion dollar foundations as soon as the public relations, political and financial benefits of “demonizing” fishermen and fishing became apparent to them. This has resulted in many boats being permanently forced off the water, many shore-side support businesses permanently shutting down and a general public impression that most of what’s wrong with our fisheries and our oceans is due to uncontrolled and uncaring fishermen. The ongoing and now institutionalized New England groundfish debacle is a sad example of this. These foundations and the ENGOs and academics that they have hired have also paved the way for a “revolution” in fishing, but not in how fish are caught or provided to consumers, but in how fishing businesses are actually structured.

Recognizing that this has been going on and familiar with the significant negative impacts it has been having on traditional fishermen and traditional fisheries, fishing industry supporters in Congress have been and still are committed to restoring the role of fishermen in federal fisheries management. In spite of a seeming avalanche of what can’t be seen as anything other than anti-fishing propaganda, they are still intent on incorporating all we have learned about maintaining sustainability in the fisheries management process.

Behind the anti-fishing ENGOs

I’ve written before about how fisheries management has been distorted by influence brought to bear by a handful of multi-billion dollar foundations, the PR machines they control and the organizations and individuals that they use their wealth to co-opt. Never before, however, have I come across such a clear cut example of how this is done as I did in the ongoing campaign over the past year striving to stop fishing industry supported amendments to the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management Act.

Introduced by Alaska Congressman Don Young, who is now the third most senior Member of the House of Representatives, the legislation was named the ***Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act***. In his words it “*aims to improve federal fishery management in order to give Regional Fishery Management Councils the proper tools and flexibility necessary to effectively manage their fisheries.*” The Congressman, along with Congressman Gerry Studds (D, MA) and Senators Warren Magnuson (D, WA) and Ted Stevens (R, AK) played a key role in originally creating the Magnuson-Stevens Act and getting it passed. (While it’s not mentioned on Congressman Young’s website at <http://donyoung.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=398236>, the problems in the current version of the Act are those that are there thanks to aggressive and expensive campaigns by a handful of foundation funded ENGOs to amend the original Act.)

The Pew Charitable Trusts and individuals and organizations they support have been in large part responsible for this campaign, as they were for the initial amendments that Congressman Young’s legislation is attempting to put right.

Back in May I was forwarded an email from a government and business consulting firm with offices in Washington, DC, Newark, NJ, Trenton, NJ, Albany, NY, Columbus, OH, and Harrisburg, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, PA. The email was a follow-up to a previous message and the subject was “*FISH-Executive Chef Sign on Letter.*”

The author wrote that she was working with the PEW Charitable Trusts to get signatures on a letter asking Members of Congress to, among other things, “*oppose efforts to weaken the conservation provisions of the law...*” The law is the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The efforts to “weaken it” are the ***Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act***. A careful reading of the proposed amendments to the Act would show that this is in no way accurate.

The letter was an attempt to get executive chefs from the food industry, a group which has become increasingly powerful in molding political opinion and public policy since the advent of “celebrity chefs,” to “protect” fish and shellfish in U.S. waters from the supposed depredations of supposed anti-conservation minded U.S. fishermen

This appeal resulted in a letter addressed to Members of Congress dated May 29 that was posted on Congressman Grijalva’s House Natural Resources Committee minority website. It cited the opposition of the signatories (executive chefs and others) to the efforts to amend Magnuson; amendments that would once again allow fishermen more of a say in fisheries management and give fisheries managers some flexibility when the existing science isn’t adequate to support what are now government mandated management actions. The letter is at <http://tinyurl.com/GrijalvaSiteLetter>. It was identified as “*Chefs Letters Opposing Empty Oceans Act.*”

Congressman Grijalva is the ranking member of the House Resources Committee.

(The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that there were 118,000 chefs and head cooks employed in the U.S. in May of 2014. *Statista* reported the number of restaurants at over 600,000. The letter was signed by 37 chefs.)

Cited along with this were letters from 18 other groups. One was from the Pew Charitable Trusts. The other groups have directly or indirectly received tens of millions of dollars from those “Charitable” trusts. Among them was one from the group identified as the “NGO Community,” signed by representatives of The Conservation Law Foundation (received at least \$1 million from Pew), Earthjustice (received at least \$23 million from Pew), Gulf Restoration Network (received almost \$1 million from Pew), Oceana (received at least \$62 million from Pew), Chesapeake Bay Foundation (received \$1/4 million from Pew), Environmental Defense (received at least \$2 million from Pew), Ocean Conservancy (received at least \$1/2 million from Pew), Natural Resources Defense Council (received at least \$1 million from Pew). A letter identified as from the Fishing Community Coalition was signed by the President of The Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen’s Alliance (received at least \$1.5 million from Pew while previously known as the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen’s Association). The New England Aquarium (received at least \$11 million from Pew) and The Marine Fish Conservation Network (received at least \$4 million from Pew) sent their own letters.

Fine, you might say, particularly if you've swallowed all of the anti-fishing propaganda directly or indirectly paid for by a small group of huge foundations. Making them especially effective at this, they have pooled their efforts to "revolutionize" fishing (see the addendum about U.S. Agency for International Development creation, the Consultative Group on Biological Diversity), or rather to revolutionize fishing businesses, in our federal waters.

For a bit more insight as to what's going on let's follow some of the money.

The Pew Charitable Trusts were established by the heirs of the founder of Sun Oil (Sunoco). While estimates vary, it seems to be generally accepted that the Trusts have in the neighborhood of \$5,000,000,000 in assets (for an idea of scale, the entire U.S. commercial fishing industry lands about five billion dollars' worth of fish and shellfish each year).

The Pew Trusts are controlled by a Board of Directors. Seven of the Board members are Pews, another, Rebecca Rimel, is the Executive Director of the Trusts. Another, Robert H. Campbell, "...served as Chief Executive Officer of Sunoco Inc., a domestic refiner and marketer of petroleum products from September 1991 to June 2000 and its President from 1991 to 1996." Another, Susan W. Catherwood, is "a Director of The Glenmede Corporation. She is also a Director at The Glenmede Trust Company, N.A. since 1998. She is also a Director of the Glenmede Trust Company of New Jersey.... She serves as a Trustee at The Glenmede Fund, Inc." (from Company Overview of The Glenmede Corporation, Bloomberg Business). Another, Aristides W. Georgantas, is on the Board of Glenmede. Another, Robert G. Williams is Chairman of The Glenmede Corporation and Director of The Glenmede Trust Company, N.A.

And "the Glenmede Trust Company was founded in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1956 by four children of Joseph N. Pew, founder of Sun Oil Company, to serve as the corporate trustee for the trusts they had endowed to honor their parents. The Pew Memorial Trust, as it came to be known, was funded with Sun Oil Co. stock..." (https://www.glenmede.com/our_story/history).

It seems inarguable that the Board of the Pew Trusts, with at least twelve members (out of thirteen) having close ties to the Sun Oil fortune and/or its offspring, the Glenmede Trust Company, wanted Congressman Young's proposed fisherman friendly amendments to the Magnuson-Stevens Act to be defeated. These amendments would have instituted some conservation neutral "fixes" to Magnuson provisions which had been added since 1976 and which have been threatening the continued existence of fishermen, fishing families, fishing businesses and fishing communities around our coasts. But with the resources of a huge and powerful organization to draw on, it's pretty easy to get what you want.

If this was an important issue for regular folks – meaning those of us of limited means who either aren't very, very wealthy or don't work for or hang out with those who are - we might call the offices of our reps in Congress. If it were a really important issue we might write them a letter or two. If it were a potentially life-shattering issue we might visit their local or DC offices.

Along with voting every couple of years and staying politically informed I'm pretty sure that's the kind of thing that Lincoln had in mind with his of, by and for the people.

What did the people at Pew do? They spent some of their five billion or so dollars – they used to report relevant information about their grants (*amount, for what, to whom*) on their website but they stopped that several years back so we don't know how much they spent – to hire at least one consulting firm. And the consulting firm set out to get a bunch of chefs to sign on to a letter that while seeming to save these fishermen - and the fish in the EEZ – from their own greed and shortsightedness would in fact continue the campaign of regulating them out of business.

This letter was accompanied by other letters from people and organizations – mostly ENGOs - that had either benefitted from Pew funding that ranged from hundreds of thousands to tens of millions of dollars or that were apparently convinced by other means (more consultants?) to sign on.

How much did all of those other letters cost?

Some obvious questions stemming from these manipulations concern what the total cost was to Pew, how actually informed were the signatories that Pew or Pew's grantees or Pew's hirelings on the issues that their letters addressed, and how representative of government of, for and by the people is this?

Is there an oligarchy in fishing's future?

For the past several years, fanned by what's going on in modern Russia, there has been a lot of interest by the media in oligarchs and oligarchies. Defined as "a country, business, etc., that is controlled by a small group of people" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary), an oligarchy would seem to be the antithesis of government as Lincoln envisioned it. But along with the foregoing, follow some of the links below and then consider the influence Pew has in or over the domestic fisheries management system (and on fisheries management in other countries as well). And consider as well that thirteen people wield all that power. Of those thirteen people seven are in the founder's family and at least twelve have significant ties to Sun Oil/Sunoco and/or the private bank that was formed to administer the trusts established with Sun Oil/Sunoco stock. You decide!

To the extent that multi-billion dollar foundations such as Pew continue to have their way by mounting campaigns that any of the affected groups can't afford to effectively counter, and by exerting influence in Washington that few in the private sector are capable of, the folks at the St. Augustine Lighthouse Museum who think the people can't change government will be justified. And the rest of us, those of us who know that Lincoln had it right at Gettysburg, will be increasingly marginalized.

To put the potential impact of Pew's billions of dollars into a more comprehensible context, follow the links below:

- **Pew, Academia and ENGOS** - For a listing of projects funded by the Pew Trusts and several other multi-billion dollar foundations intending to fix (in their view) fishing and ocean governance look at the foundations grants database on the <http://www.fishtruth.net> website – on the “Connections” page follow the link at the beginning of the third paragraph. Grants were only listed until 2008. After that date the foundation folks made it much less convenient to determine who they were paying for what. From 1998 to 2008 Pew provided over \$270 million to Universities, ENGOS and fishermen's Associations for fisheries and related projects.
- **Pew, USAID and other Foundations** - The question of the degree of coordination and cooperation between and among the involved foundations has often arisen. Not too surprisingly, the federal government through the USAID has been fostering such coordination and cooperation through its low profile Consultative Group on Biological Diversity. See a column I wrote for Saving Seafood at <http://www.fishnet-usa.com/All%20Stolpe%20Columns.htm#CGBD> for some background.
- **Pew and federal fisheries governance** - Pew, Much of the existing federal oceans policy was determined by the *Pew Oceans Commission* (and its doppelganger, *The United States Commission on Ocean Policy*) which issued its final report in 2003. In *The Pew Commission – a basis for national ocean policy?* (<http://www.fishingnj.org/netusa23.htm>) I discuss some of the shortcomings of the Pew Commission and its “accomplishments.”
- **Pew and the media** - At least until 2008 Pew's financial support of print and broadcast media was of the same magnitude (or greater) than its support of reconfiguring fisheries management/ocean governance. A synopsis of Pew and the media pre 2008 is available on the FishTruth website at <http://www.fishtruth.net/PDF/PewMedia.pdf>. On a more personal level see *In the Belly of the Big Green Beast* at http://www.fishnet-usa.com/In_Belly_Of_Beast.pdf.
- **Pew and Fishermen** - For a short analysis of Pew's efforts in fisheries/ocean governance from an industry perspective see *The anti-fishing movement; a U.S. perspective* at http://fishtruth.net/PDF/Num1_Antis_Updated.pdf.
- **Pew, Congress and the Magnuson Act** - In spite of the opposition, Congressman Young's amendments to Magnuson embodied in the *Strengthening Fishing Communities and Increasing Flexibility in Fisheries Management Act* passed the House of Representatives and went to the Senate. There has been no subsequent action and President Obama has indicated an unwillingness to sign it if it passes in the Senate.
- **Pew and the Obama Whitehouse** - At the very beginning of President Obama's first term his administration organized the *Setting Ocean Priorities for the New Administration and Congress Workshop*. There were 65 participants and 13 staff listed. Of them over 75% had identifiable ties to funding from either Pew or three other mega-foundations who have been active in fisheries-related funding from about the same perspective as Pew but to a lesser extent. Of the five “fishermen” participants, one who was recreational and four commercial, all have ties to at least one of the foundations. The participants and staff and their connections are listed at <http://www.fishtruth.net/ObamaAdminWorkshop.htm>.
- **Pew and astroturf roots** – The people at Pew are past masters at making campaigns that they originate and in large part operate appear as if they are actually “grass roots” movements. I examined this phenomena in *Your roots are showing* (<http://fishnet-usa.com/RootsAreShowing.pdf>) and *The times they are a'changin* for the Saving Seafood website at <http://www.savingseafood.org/opinion/the-times-they-are-a-changin-by-nils-stolpe>.