



## **2013 Spiny Dogfish Fishery Performance Report**

The Spiny Dogfish Advisory Panel (AP) met from 1 PM – 2:30 PM Sept 10, 2013 via webinar to develop a Fishery Performance Report (FPR) for consideration during the upcoming specification cycle. Following the meeting, the AP reviewed and approved the summary below as the FPR.

MAFMC Dogfish Advisers in attendance were: Eric Brazer (MA commercial fishing organization), James Fletcher (NC commercial fishing organization), Jack Musick (VA academic), and James Sulikowski (ME academic). Also in attendance were Marin Hawk (ASMFC Plan Coordinator), Nils Stolpe (Saving Seafood), and Janice Plante (Commercial Fisheries News).

### **Recreational Fishery Issues**

No discussion

### **Market / Economic Issues**

#### **Market Demand Controlling Landings**

The market for dogfish is currently very depressed with ex-vessel prices of about \$0.12/lb compared to a typical prices \$0.22/lb. Market conditions were described as explaining 100% of landings levels, i.e., the availability and abundance of the resource (nearshore or offshore) is not at all constraining right now. The low value of dogfish limits the extent to which fishermen are willing to retain dogfish as part of their offshore catch in preference of more valuable species.

#### **Constraints on Market Demand**

The primary market outlet for most of the processed spiny dogfish is the EU, so any perturbations in demand by that market greatly influence the rate at which domestic processors will accept the product. Whereas the processors typically accept dogfish seven days/week, they are now only accepting full or reduced dogfish limits a few days/week. There was an apparent PCB issue in the EU involving reduce detection standards that has, at least, temporarily depressed that market. There is some hope that as the fresh market opens up (beginning of Sept) the issue may subside. Fishermen do not feel that the issue has been clearly defined or communicated to them. The impact of this event is especially disappointing to fishermen given that certification of the fishery by the Marine Stewardship Council was expected to improve the size and stability of the export market. It was noted that the Pacific spiny dogfish fishery is also currently very depressed.

#### **Change Market Name of Dogfish**

It was suggested that a change in the market name for spiny dogfish (for example "chipfish" which comes from the use of the product in fish and chips) might help in the development of a domestic market. It was pointed out that according to the USDA's "Principles for Determining Acceptable Market Names", a coined name (Principle 6) can be used as long as it complies with all other USDA Principles.

The limitations of such a change was also brought up since the common name, spiny dogfish, is well known and well established in the scientific literature.

## **Environmental Issues**

No noteworthy changes were identified that were linked to the distribution or availability of spiny dogfish. There was a suggestion that groundfish are currently distributed further offshore and that lower retention of dogfish on offshore trips is occurring, but the differential availability of dogfish nearshore vs. offshore was not the issue. There was a comment that preliminary evidence suggests like sized spiny dogfish and cod may be competing for forage resources.

## **Management Issues**

### **Trip Limit**

An interest in exploring alternatives to the current "one size fits all" approach for trip limits was discussed. It was suggested that an exploration of alternative trip limits for different components of the commercial fishery should be initiated. The current trip limit is 4,000 lb coastwide in federal waters and varies by state. The increase from 3,000 lb to 4,000 lb has not produced any negative biological impacts, however, a trip limit scenario that considers gear and vessel type was suggested as a potential improvement.

### **Limited Access**

Support for a limited entry permit program was repeated from last year's discussion. There was unanimous support for exploring limited access options to ensure that the fishery is operated by experienced dogfish fishermen who have a history in the fishery and can avoid protected species issues.

### **Male Dogfish Fishery**

The lack of a commercial fishery for the male component of the stock was discussed. There was support for the development of a separate accounting system for male dogfish so that a market and directed fishery for male dogfish could be developed. The transition to a separate accounting system could have implications for population modeling.

### **Alternative Unit Stock Definition**

It was suggested that tagging work that has been done on spiny dogfish movement and distribution could affect the definition of the management unit and, therefore, how the stock(s) is (are) managed. It was pointed out that evidence for multiple stocks would need to be incorporated into the assessment work and so a multiple stock approach would need to be examined and validated within a peer-reviewed assessment exercise. A peer-reviewed benchmark assessment could be conducted according to the currently accepted schedule or could be added to the schedule upon Council request.

## **Other**

The very low pup production from 1997 to 2003 should be entering the exploitable stock now. Any underperformance of the fishery was suggested as offsetting the decreased productivity of the stock associated with that transition.