

2012 Spiny Dogfish Fishery Performance Report

The Spiny Dogfish Advisory Panel (AP) met from 10 AM – 12:30 AM Sept 18, 2012 in Philadelphia, PA to develop a Fishery Performance Report (FPR) for consideration during the upcoming specification cycle. At the end of its meeting, the AP reviewed and approved the summary below as the FPR.

MAFMC Dogfish Advisers in attendance were: Kevin Wark (NJ commercial fisherman), James Fletcher (NC commercial fishing organization), Jack Musick (VA academic), and James Sulikowski (ME academic). Also in attendance was David Tomberlin of the SSC.

Recreational Fishery Issues

No discussion

Market / Economic Issues

The low value of dogfish constrains the extent to which fishermen are willing to go offshore to fish for them. This may explain the low landings that have been observed thus far via quota monitoring (see Figure 1 in the staff memo). The drop in Canadian landing starting in 2009 is explained by the increased U.S. quotas, cost of shipping to processors (all in New Bedford, MA), and a weak belly flap market. Canadians shifted effort to abundant and more valuable lobsters.

The generally poor economy in Europe where Germany is an important importer of dogfish is constraining demand. The certification of the fishery by the Marine Stewardship Council will likely improve European demand but the economy will likely continue to impose constraints.

The market is not ready right now for huge increases in dogfish but a slow transition to larger scale harvest may be possible. This includes having other processors, perhaps most importantly in the southern end of the range, accepting dogfish.

Environmental Issues

Fish have been offshore this year due to water being warmer earlier in the year than usual. Another environmental factor affecting the drop in dogfish commercial landings in NC is the closure of Oregon Inlet which decreases commercial fishing access/effort off NC.

Spiny dogfish are available year round now in the Gulf of Maine.

Management Issues & Management Induced Effort Shifts

The quota is adequate if in combination with the trip limit, it keeps the fishery open all year. Trip limits should probably be increased to 4,000 pounds but no more than that or it will attract

fishermen into the [open access] fishery that are less skilled at avoiding protected species such as sturgeon and marine mammals.

A limited entry permit would be a good idea to ensure that the fishery is operated by experienced dogfish fishermen who have a history in the fishery and can avoid protected species issues.

There is a perception that the ability to separately account for male and female dogfish would allow for the development of a market for male dogfish which are currently under-exploited. A recommendation was made for developing a management model for administering a male dogfish fishery. Additionally, population modeling associated with a smaller exploitable size may be needed to supplement that effort. It was suggested that the military and prisons may be potential markets for male dogfish.

Longer term specifications would greatly benefit industry in terms of planning.

General Fishing Trends

It was suggested that characterizing the size composition of the population using a trawl survey is problematic since trawl caught dogfish tend to be smaller than gillnet caught dogfish.

The absolute size of the dogfish population was suggested to be underestimated by approximately 50%. This is largely driven by the presence of a separate stock off North Carolina that exhibits east-west rather than north-south migratory behavior. It was suggested that only 20% of that population is covered by the trawl survey.

The recovery of dogfish was suggested to be a major constraint for the viability of other stocks, primarily GOM Gadids.

Other Issues

A statement was made about multiple sources of precaution being applied as the process moves from the assessment to management measure implementation.