

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

**ADDENDUM I TO THE SPINY DOGFISH FISHERY
MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Multiple-year specification of total allowable landings for Spiny Dogfish



Approved November 2005

ASMFC Vision Statement:

Healthy, self-sustaining populations for all Atlantic coast fish species or successful restoration well in progress by the year 2015.

Introduction

At its February 2005 meeting, the Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Shark Management Board (Management Board) approved a motion to initiate the development of Addendum 1 to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Spiny Dogfish. This motion included setting a multi-year specification process for the total allowable landings of spiny dogfish. The Management Board is considering this action in order to conserve the species while alleviating some of the administrative costs and burden encountered as part of an annual specification process. Following the approval of this motion, the Board requested that a range of alternatives for managing the spiny dogfish fishery be included in this document.

This draft addendum presents the background on the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC) management of spiny dogfish, the addendum process and anticipated timeline, and a statement of the problem. This document also provides for public consideration and comment on the options presented.

Background

Addendum 1 is adopted under the adaptive management procedures that are a part of the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Spiny Dogfish. This addendum is authorized by *Section 4.4.2* of the Interstate (FMP) for Spiny Dogfish (2002). This fishery is managed cooperatively by the states, through ASMFC, and the federal government, through the New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC).

On April 3, 1998, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) declared spiny dogfish overfished. Federal action was initiated as increased fishing effort was directed on the spiny dogfish stock, which was a result of the declining abundance of more traditional groundfish resources. With no restraint on the harvest of spiny dogfish in the U.S. exclusive economic zone (EEZ), fishing effort increased and most of the effort was directed on the removal of the adult female component of the stock. Ultimately, this resulted in NMFS designating spiny dogfish as overfished, which mandated the development of a federal management plan.

Initial management actions to regulate the spiny dogfish fishery began in 1998 with the approval of a draft document called, "The Spiny Dogfish FMP" by MAFMC and NEFMC. The FMP was partially approved by NMFS on September 29, 1999. The final rule implementing the FMP was published on January 10, 2000. The current federal FMP is based on a constant fishing mortality strategy that allows for low bycatch landings in the initial stages with increased landings as the female portion of the stock rebuilds (MAFMC and NEFMC, 1999). The federal FMP specifies a coastwide target fishing mortality rate of $F = 0.03$. This F target results in an initial quota of 4 million pounds. The annual quota is split on a semi-annual basis of Period I extending from May 1 through October 31, and Period II from November 1 through April 30. To control the level of effort, the management program also uses possession limits of 600 and 300 pounds for Period I and II, respectively.

The federal plan only regulated the practices of permitted fishermen harvesting in the EEZ. As a result, in August 2000, ASMFC's Management Board took emergency action to close state waters to the commercial harvest, landing, and possession of spiny dogfish when federal waters

were closed due to the fishery landing its quota. The intent of the Emergency Action was to: 1) prevent the overharvest of spiny dogfish, thereby reducing the risk of stock collapse; 2) prevent the unregulated portion of the spiny dogfish fishery in state waters from undermining the intent of the federal Spiny Dogfish Management Plan; and 3) provide time for ASMFC to develop an interstate spiny dogfish FMP which would provide a framework for managing the fishery in state waters.

The Spiny Dogfish Emergency Action was due to expire and could not be extended beyond January 31, 2003 due to ASMFC's policies regarding emergency actions. Emergency actions are effective for 180 days from the date of the Management Board's declaration of an emergency, at which time the Board can extend the emergency action for two additional periods of up to one year each. The extensions can be made provided the Management Board has initiated action to prepare a fishery management plan. Pursuant to the Emergency Action, ASMFC's Spiny Dogfish and Coastal Shark Management Board and ISFMP Policy Board approved the development of an interstate spiny dogfish FMP before the expiration of the Emergency Action on January 31, 2003. This plan was completed and implemented by the states in 2002.

Purpose and Need for Action

ASMFC specifies total allowable landings (TALs) for the spiny dogfish fishery in order to achieve healthy and self-sustaining fish populations. Currently, the Spiny Dogfish Technical Committee annually reviews the best available data relating to the spiny dogfish fishery. Based on this review, the Technical Committee will recommend to the Management Board management measures designed to assure that the target mortality level for spiny dogfish is not exceeded. The Board considers this information and makes final determination on the quota and possession limits for the following year. All states are required to implement measures contained in the final decision made by the Board.

Under this current management system for spiny dogfish, the specification of commercial quotas and trip limits are conducted every year and apply only to the following fishing year. This annual process makes it difficult for industry to set long term business plans and goals. This addendum allows for specification of TALs for the spiny dogfish fishery in any given year for up to five years. This allows for fishermen to better utilize the quota to meet their fishing needs. Multi-year specifications also allow fishermen to establish strong business plans that are effective in meeting their goals. Multi-year specifications also streamline the administrative and regulatory processes involved in specifying commercial quotas and trip limits for the spiny dogfish fishery while, at the same time, maintaining consistency with the original Spiny Dogfish FMP and federal regulations.

Management Program

Addendum 1 to the Interstate FMP for Spiny Dogfish is intended to improve management of the Northeast Atlantic stock of spiny dogfish. This addendum modifies the current FMP so that, within a given year, TALs for the spiny dogfish fishery can be specified for up to five years. Multi-year TALs and other management measures do not have to be constant from year to year, but instead are based upon expectations of future stock conditions as indicated by the best available scientific information during the year in which specifications are set.

Implementation of Addendum 1 will provide the option, not the requirement, for ASMFC to specify multi-year management measures.

Under this management program, if multi-year commercial quotas and trip limits are implemented, annual review of updated information on the fishery and stock conditions for spiny dogfish by the Technical Committee and Management Board is required. As part of the annual review process, the specified management measures will be evaluated based upon updated scientific information on stock conditions and the established target fishing mortality. If no adjustment to the subsequent year's specifications is indicated following scientific review, then the existing management measures will be considered adequate and implemented the following year. If, however, updates to stock conditions determine that specified measures should be modified, then the Spiny Dogfish Board will be presented with this information and a new specification setting process will be initiated.