

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Spiny Dogfish Technical Committee

September 24, 2010

Specification Recommendations for May 2011 – April 2012 Spiny Dogfish Fishing Season

This report summarizes the recommendations and discussions from a joint meeting of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) Spiny Dogfish Technical Committee (TC) and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) Spiny Dogfish Monitoring Committee (MC). The meeting was held in Warwick Rhode Island on September 24, 2010. This report only summarizes recommendations of the TC. Please see the MC report for their recommendations and details on the federal process.

TC Attendance:

J. Armstrong (MAFMC), P. Rago (NMFS NEFSC), Angel Willey (MD DNR), C. Gray (NC DMF), R. Babb (NJ DEP), E. Schneider (RI DFW), M. Gates (CT DEP), E. Bryant (NMFS NERO), S. Newlin (DE DFW), and C. Vonderweidt (ASMFC Staff).

MC Attendance (not on TC):

Dan McKiernan (MADMF)

Observers:

Louis Julliard (AML International), Steve Barndollar (Seatrade), Kristian Kristensen (Zeus Packing).

TC Recommendations:

The TC recommends a 20 million pound quota with 3,000 pound possession limits for the 2011/2012 fishing season *only*. The TC recommends setting a single year specifications to allow for an additional year of dead discards estimates and the Canadian landings when setting the 2012/2013+ specifications (discussed at length below).

Background and Discussion:

Biomass estimates in 2009 (163,256 mt) and 2010 (164,066 mt) exceed the biomass target (159,288 mt). Fishing mortality (F) is estimated to be $F = 0.113$ in 2009 which is well below the target (0.207) and threshold (0.325) F rates. Therefore spiny dogfish are not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.

While spiny dogfish have rebuilt, the stock is expected to decrease below the target biomass around 2014 because of record low recruitment from 1997 – 2003. The magnitude of this drop increases with fishing mortality and occurs even when fishing mortality is zero.

The TC agreed that setting the quota based on F75% target is reasonable because it allows for a considerable increase in quota while minimizing the future SSB decline. They agreed that a quota based on Fthreshold (0.325) is inappropriate because the stock does not stabilize at or near Bmsy in the near future under Fthreshold. Setting the quota based on F75% target is generally consistent with the recommendations of the MAFMC Science and Statistical Committee (SSC). The TC is not bound by SSC recommendations but they agreed that setting consistent quotas between state and federal waters is beneficial. After agreeing that the quota should be set based on F75% target; the TC discussed discards, Canadian catch, and the recreational fishery.

Quota:

The equation used by the TC to calculate the 2011/2012 (and previous years) quota is:

$$\text{Quota} = \text{Total catch (based on Frate)} - \text{estimated dead discards} - \text{estimated Canadian landings} - \text{estimated recreational landings}$$

Total catch based F75% target = 15,341 metric tons.

Discards

For the last few years, dead discards have been estimated as a proportion of the total catch. However, discards have remained around 5,000 metric tons since 1996 independent of increases or decreases in total catch (Table 1). As such, the TC felt that using the most recent year (2009) dead discards for the 2011/2012 estimate is more appropriate than discards based on a percent of total catch. The TC discussed using an average of the last 3 years dead discards, but agreed that an average does not change the value significantly (difference of 68 metric tons), and is inconsistent with methods (using most recent year rather than an average) used to estimate Canadian and recreational landings (see Canadian Landings and Recreational Landings sections of this report).

Table 1. Total dead discards and total catch from 1996 - 2009

| | Total Dead Discards (mt) | Total Catch (mt) |
|-------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1996 | 6,025 | 33,852 |
| 1997 | 4,366 | 23,443 |
| 1998 | 3,435 | 25,764 |
| 1999 | 4,581 | 22,134 |
| 2000 | 2,917 | 15,321 |
| 2001 | 5,063 | 11,882 |
| 2002 | 5,049 | 11,510 |
| 2003 | 4,225 | 7,380 |
| 2004 | 6,146 | 9,925 |
| 2005 | 5,589 | 9,382 |
| 2006 | 5,688 | 10,480 |
| 2007 | 6,510 | 12,512 |
| 2008 | 5,088 | 11,113 |
| 2009 | 5,897 | 11,503 |

The TC also agrees that discards are likely to be less than 5,896 metric tons (2009 value) in 2010 because of fishing restrictions under Amendment 16 the Northeast Multispecies Groundfish FMP (Amendment 16). Amendment 16 establishes sectors, allows for higher possession limits, and reduces harvest levels for groundfish species. As a result, the number of otter trawl days-at-sea are likely to decrease because these vessels can land more groundfish per trip under higher trip limits. The higher possession limits also give fishermen an incentive to bring in only higher value species and avoid species such as dogfish and skates that take up valuable space in their holds.

Canadian Landings

Canadian landings dropped significantly from 1,572 mt in 2008 to 113 mt in 2009 and are likely to remain at this low level in 2010. Preliminary information suggests that as of September 19, 2010 landings were less than 6 metric tons (pers. comm. Zeus Packing). The Canadian fishery generally occurs between May and October, and as such, a significant increase above 6 mt's is unlikely. The drop in Canadian landings is thought to be a result of market issues related to reduced demand in Europe. Industry representatives at the meeting commented that there are too few processing facilities left in Canada to allow for a large increase in landings. If European demand increases, it will likely take several years before Canadian processors are able to process large amounts of dogfish.

The TC agrees that the most recent years Canadian landings (113 mt in 2009) should be used as the value to calculate the 2011/2012 quota.

Recreational Landings

Recreational Landings account for around 1-2% of total landings. The TC agreed that the most recent years recreational landings should be used. This approach is consistent with the method used by the TC in previous years. Recreational landings were estimated to be 34 mt in 2009.

2011/2012 Annual Quota

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Total catch F75% target | 15,341 mt |
| Estimated dead discards | -5,897 mt |
| Estimated Canadian landings | -113 mt |
| Estimated recreational landings | <u>-34 mt</u> |
| | = 9,297 mt (20,496,166 pounds) |

The TC agreed to round down to 20 million pounds to provide a slight buffer for Canadian landings and dead discards. TC members agreed that a small buffer is appropriate for the 2011/2012 fishing season but may be unnecessary in future years, once the impacts of Amendment 16 are known and the Canadian fishery has stabilized.

The TC's unanimous recommendation for the 2011/2012 annual quota is 20 million pounds.

Possession Limits

The TC recommends that the Board continue with a 3,000 pound possession limit for the 2010/2011 fishing season because a 3,000 limit allowed fishermen to harvest the entire quota in past years without exceeding the target F. The TC agrees that there is little scientific justification for a large or small possession limit and setting the amounts is a policy/management decision.

Other Business

The TC noted that the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is scheduled to meet with several members of the TC and Board in late 2010 to potentially certify spiny dogfish. Members noted that MSC certification is likely to increase European demand for dogfish which could benefit US fishermen and processors in the future.