

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
Spiny Dogfish Technical Committee

November 23, 2009

***Specification Recommendations for May 2010 – April 2011 Spiny Dogfish
Fishing Season***

This report summarizes the recommendations and discussions from an initial meeting and subsequent conference call 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 initial meeting was held in Warwick Rhode Island on October 29, 2009 and the conference call was held on November 13, 2009. This report only summarizes recommendations of the TC. Please see the attached Monitoring Committee Follow-Up Notes document for details of the Monitoring Committee recommendations and federal process.

TC Attendance at the October 29 Meeting¹:

J. Armstrong (MAFMC), P. Rago (NMFS NEFSC), K. Sosebee (NMFS NEFSC), 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 at the October 29 Meeting:

C. Hickman (NC Public), S. Sagarese (Stonybrook Univ), and E. Brazer (CCCHFA).

TC Attendance on the November 13 Call:

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

MC Attendance on the November 13 Call:

Dan Furlong (MAFMC Staff), John Boreman (MAFMC Staff), Tom Miller (MAFMC Staff), C. Hickman (NC Public), S. Sagarese (Stonybrook Univ), E. Brazer (CCCHFA), Dan McKiernan (MA DMF), Greg DiDomenico (GSSA), and Kristen Cevoli (PEW).

¹ Members of both the TC and MC are only listed under TC Attendance.

TC Recommendations:

The TC recommends an initial 9.1 million pound quota for the 2010/2011 fishing season and a 3,000 pound possession limit. A 9.1 million pound quota is likely to achieve $\text{Frebuild} = 0.11$. A Transboundary Resources Assessment Committee (TRAC) benchmark assessment report should be available the week of January 25, 2010. The TC would like to review the TRAC report and make updated quota and possession limit recommendations to the Spiny Dogfish & Coastal Sharks Board when the report becomes available.

Background and Discussion:

The updated stochastic estimate of mature female biomass (SSB) for 2009² is 2.7% below $\text{SSB}_{\text{target}}$. SSB is estimated to be 163,256 mt in 2009 which is slightly below $\text{SSB}_{\text{target}} = 167,800 \text{ mt}^3$ and well above $\text{SSB}_{\text{threshold}} = 83,500$. Fishing mortality (F) is estimated to be 0.11 in 2008 which is well below both $\text{F}_{\text{target}} = 0.284$ and $\text{F}_{\text{threshold}} = 0.39$, and achieves the Board's F goal = 0.11. *The stock is not overfished and overfishing is not occurring.*

While the spawning stock biomass (SSB) was estimated to exceed target biomass in 2008, fulfilling the criteria to declare dogfish 'rebuilt', the TC is hesitant to recommend a F rate greater than $\text{Frebuild} = 0.11$. The 2009 SSB update is a 'turn of the crank' and does not update key parameters from the 2006 benchmark assessment such as selectivity and pup survivorship which strongly impact the target and threshold F rates. Selecting a quota based on $\text{F}_{\text{threshold}} = 0.39$ or $\text{F}_{\text{target}} = 0.24$ without updating input parameters such as selectivity and pup survivorship could lead to overfishing.

The TC recommendation of a 9.1 million pound quota (estimated to achieve $\text{Frebuild} = 0.11$) for the 2010/2011 fishing season is based on the understanding that the Board can make in-season adjustments, and has in the past as new information became available. A Spiny Dogfish TRAC assessment and review workshop will take place the week of January 25, 2010. A report summarizing the benchmark assessment is likely to be available around March 2010. The 2010 TRAC assessment will use a more complex model than the previous assessment and will update reference points and input parameters to more accurately reflect the current fishery and stock makeup. The TC would like to review the report when it becomes available and make updated quota and possession limit recommendations to the Board. The TC notes that the Board made an in-season adjustment to 2006/2007 quota when the 2007 NEFSC SSB update estimated a significant increase in dogfish SSB.

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 feel that possession limit amounts are a policy/management decision.

²See "Update on the Status of Spiny Dogfish in 2009 and Initial Evaluation of Alternative Harvest Strategies" for specifics.

³SSB is about 194,584 mt under the Federal plan ($\text{SSB}_{\text{max}} = 200,000 \text{ mt}$). The different SSB and $\text{SSB}_{\text{target}}$ values reflect different assumptions in the plans about the average size of the survey trawl "footprint" used to estimate total swept area biomass. This is a scaling factor, however, meaning that the values are functionally equivalent