

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

Spiny Dogfish Technical Committee

September 22, 2011

Specification Recommendations for May 2012 – April 2013 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 Baltimore, Maryland on September 22, 2011. 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 (NEFSC), M. Cieri (ME DMR), J. Musick (VIMS), A. Willey (MD DNR), R. Babb (NJ DEP), E. Schneider (RI DFW), M. Gates (CT DEP), W. Laney (USFWS), and C. Vonderweidt (ASMFC Staff).

MC Attendance (not on TC):

D. McKiernan (MADMF), E. Brazer (CCCHFS) and T. Curtis (NMFS NERO).

Observers:

L. Julliard (AML International), S. Barndollar (Seatrade International), B. Marder (Marder Trawling), and J. Whiteside, Jr. (Sustainable Fisheries Association).

TC Recommendations for 2012/2013 Specifications:

The TC recommends a 35.6 million pound quota and did not make a possession limit recommendation for the 2012/2013 fishing season. The TC recommends setting a single year specification to allow consideration of an additional year of Canadian landings and discards when setting the 2013/2014+ specifications (discussed at length below).

Status of the Stock:

Spawning stock biomass (SSB) was estimated at 169,415 metric tons in 2011 and SSB has exceeded the target (159,288 mt) for the last 4 years. Fishing mortality (F) is estimated to be 0.113 in 2009 and 0.093 in 2010 which is well below the target (0.207) and threshold (0.325). Therefore spiny dogfish are not overfished (rebuilt in 2008) and overfishing is not occurring.

Quota Calculation:

The method used by the TC to calculate the 2012/2013 (and previous years) quota recommendation is:

Total harvest (comparable to MAFMC ABC)

- estimated dead discards
- estimated Canadian landings
- estimated recreational landings

= Annual Quota

Total Harvest

Following implementation of the Reauthorized Magnuson Stevens Act of 2006 the MC is required to follow recommendations of the MAFMC Science and Statistical Committee (SSC). The SSC met on September 21 and recommended setting the ABC based on the P*40% method established in the MAFMC's Omnibus ACL/AM Amendment (See MAFMC Spiny Dogfish Management Measure Recommendations for 2012 memo for more detail) developed by Shertzer et al. The MAFMC's ABC is equivalent to total harvest as specified by the TC in the past.

The TC is comfortable using the P*40% method to generate total harvest because it should allow for consistent future quotas while preventing SSB from dropping below the target. Projections estimate that under a P*40% strategy, SSB will remain above the target in 2012+ even with the SSB drop from the 1997 - 2003 recruitment deficit. Members of the TC also agree that consistent management measures in state and federal waters are beneficial and recommending a quota based on P* increases the probability of consistent state and federal quotas. Finally, while the TC is comfortable with the P* approach, members asked to see more information on the approach prior to future meetings. ASMFC staff emailed a copy of "A probability-based approach to setting annual catch levels" by Shertzer et al to the TC following the meeting.

Total catch based P*40% = 20,352 metric tons.

After agreeing that total harvest should be set based on P*40%; the TC discussed discards, Canadian catch, and the recreational fishery.

Discards

Dead discards were estimated as a proportion of the total catch for the 2010/2011 TC quota recommendation. However, the TC agreed to use 2009 observed dead discards (the latest estimate at the time) for the 2011/2012 quota recommendation. The TC preferred using the most recent years dead discards because estimates based on proportion of total catch were shown to overestimate dead discards. The TC noted that despite significant differences in total catch, dead discards remained around 5,000 metric tons for the last 15 years.

Members also agreed that discards were likely to be less than the 2009 estimate because of the pending implementation (May 1, 2010) of Amendment 16 the Northeast Multispecies Groundfish FMP (Amendment 16). Amendment 16 established sectors, allowed for higher possession limits, and reduced harvest levels for groundfish species. As a result, the number of

otter trawl days-at-sea was likely to decrease because these vessels could land more groundfish per trip under higher trip limits. The higher possession limits also gave 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.

The September 22nd TC meeting was the first time that discard estimates under Amendment 16 were available. As predicted, discards dropped by 31% from 2009 (5,897 mt) to 2010 (4,081 mt) and the number of commercial groundfish trips decreased by 48%. TC members acknowledged that there is only one year of discard estimates under Amendment 16, but agree that dead discards are likely to remain at 2010 amounts and may continue to decrease. The implementation of Amendment 16 created a shift in the fishery resulting in fewer discards by trawl vessels.

The TC recommends using 2010 dead discards (4,081 metric tons) as the estimate for the 2012/2013 fishing season to best represent the current management stanza under Amendment 16.

Canadian Landings

Canadian landings dropped significantly from 1,572 metric tons in 2008 to 113 metric tons in 2009. Industry representatives at the 2010 joint TC/MC meeting were confident that Canadian landings would not increase significantly in 2010 because the infrastructure to transport and process Canadian dogfish was gone. They stated that if demand increased, it would take several years before Canadian processors could process large amounts of dogfish. Following these recommendations, the TC estimated Canadian landings for the 2011/2012 fishing season based on the most recent year (113 mt in 2009).

Canadian landings continued at low levels in 2010 totaling 6 metric tons. Industry representatives at this meeting commented that Canadian dogfish landings will increase in the near future for a number of reasons. They explained that the Canadian fishery catches mostly smaller males that are harder to process and are less valuable than larger females caught in the US fishery. Canadian dogfish used to be shipped to Europe, but the demand dried up in recent years. As a result, the last two Canadian processors (North Lake and Ocean Pride) have closed. Canadian dealers are no longer buying dogfish because transport to US processors is cost prohibitive. The lack of demand and absence of processors makes an increase in Canadian landings unlikely for the 2012/2013 fishing season.

Similar to the dead discard estimate, the TC agrees that the Canadian spiny dogfish fishery has changed significantly in recent years and landings in the 2012/2013 fishing season will be similar to 2009 & 2010 amounts. To reduce variability the TC agreed to take the average of these two years and use 59.5 metric tons as the 2012/2013 Canadian landings estimate.

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 in previous years. Recreational landings were estimated to be 21 metric tons in 2010.

2012/2013 Annual Quota Recommendation

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|---------------------------------|--|
| Total catch P*40% | 20,352 mt |
| Estimated dead discards | -4,081 mt |
| Estimated Canadian landings | -59.5 mt |
| Estimated recreational landings | <u>-21 mt</u> |
| | = 16,190.5 mt (35.6 million pounds) |

Possession Limits

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. As such the TC did not make a possession limit recommendation. The main biological consideration with possession limits is discards. However, discards are associated with both large and small limits and there have been no studies comparing discards with various possession limits.

Other Business

The TC asked that states include a description of their states spiny dogfish fishery as part of the state compliance report.