

## 2015 Spiny Dogfish Advisory Panel (AP) Fishery Performance Report (FPR)

The Spiny Dogfish Advisory Panel (AP) (<http://www.mafmc.org/advisory-panels/>) met August 18, 2015 to develop the Fishery Performance Report (FPR) below. The meeting was conducted via internet webinar and facilitated by Jason Didden, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Dogfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) coordinator. The advisors who participated were:

Bonnie Brady  
Claire Fitz-Gerald  
Greg DiDomenico  
Jack Musick  
James Fletcher

Jan McDowell  
Scott MacDonald  
Sonja Fordham  
Chris Hickman  
Doug Feeney

Additional participants included:

Ashton Harp (ASMFC Dogfish Lead)  
David Tomberlin (MAFMC SSC)  
Fiona Hogan (NEFMC Dogfish Lead)

Katie Almeida  
Rob O'Reilly (MAFMC Dogfish Chair, VA)

The fishery performance report's primary purpose is to contextualize catch histories for the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) because of the potential importance of this and related information for determining Acceptable Biological Catches (ABCs) in cases of fisheries with high levels of assessment uncertainty. The goal is to allow comparing and contrasting of the most recent year's conditions and fishery characteristics with previous years. First an overview of recent fishery data was provided by Jason Didden, and then trigger questions were posed to the AP to generate discussion. The trigger questions were:

- \*What factors have influenced recent catch?
  - Markets/economy?      – Environment?
  - Fishery regulations?      – Other factors?
- \*Are the current fishery regulations appropriate? How could they be improved?
  - Gear regulations and exemptions?   -Trip Limits?   -Others?
- \*Where should the Council and Commission focus their research priorities?
- \*What else is important for the Council and Commission to know?

The input from the AP begins on the following page. The information in this FPR does not represent a consensus, but rather a summary of the perspectives and ideas that were raised at the meeting.

## General

- Quality is critical for maintaining price and the existing market. Large trips may have trouble maintaining product quality.
- The regional differences in the fishery mean that any changes (e.g. trip limits) have the potential to differentially impact different areas.
- Flooding processors with lots of spiny dogfish will harm the market.
  - o A contrary, minority perspective was also voiced: Developing new markets (Asia/Africa) will require lower, not higher prices, and manipulating price (by limiting catch) to address small boat concerns hinders the possibility of greater overseas markets.

## Factors Influencing Catch

- Markets are crucial to getting prices high enough to stimulate fishing activity. Low catches relative to the quota in recent years are due to low prices/effort.
- Abundance does not currently drive catches; boats have no problem obtaining their trip limits.
- There are fewer and fewer boats willing to go out for dogfish at current prices, but a small price increase could change that.
- European markets are shifting away from sharks, limiting US dogfish exports to Europe.
  - o The Shark Alliance did not promote European boycotts of US spiny dogfish/other legally caught sharks (though other entities seek/have sought to do this).
  - o Europe seems to have the U.S. figured out in terms of pricing, while traditional European demand may be declining due to changing tastes.
- Hurricane Sandy hurt New York landings because the only New York processor closed as a result.
- Virginia had been on pace to increase landings last fishing year, but snow and cold temperatures in January shut things down.
- On Cape Cod:
  - o In 2013, the price for dogfish was extremely low (~10 cents/lb) and processors instituted forced days off.
  - o In 2014, the price was much better (upper 20s cents/lb) and there were no days off.
  - o Currently price is lower again (~16 cents/lb) and there are mandatory Saturdays off.
  - o It is not clear what exactly is driving these price changes, but they have a big impact on fishing/total catches.

## Input on Regulations

- Some advisors would like to see a slow and steady approach that does not create large changes in catches and/or prices.
- Raising trip limits may collapse prices if additional markets are not developed.
- An occasional trip limit for trawlers (once or twice a month) around 30,000 pounds could help provide fish to any markets that develop.
  - o A double limit once a week was raised as an alternative possibility
- Regarding different kinds of trip limits, enforcement/monitoring needs to be ensured.
- Some in Massachusetts are interested in a seasonal (October through December) trip limit increase that would not hurt smaller boats in the summer or crash the market. Discussions are considered preliminary, but may be in the 7,500 – 10,000 pound trip limit range.
  - o There was concern that such adjustments could hurt more southern ports, and more details would be needed to evaluate.
- At least one advisor is interested in allowances to harvest male dogfish in excess of the typical trip limit and possibly a separate quota (which is currently made up of mostly female dogfish). Staff will seek input from GARFO on implementation issues regarding a male-only dogfish fishery. Another advisor noted that males can be targeted currently.

## Research Priority Ideas

- Domestic and/or non-European markets.
- Separation of spiny and smooth dogfish in NOAA trade database (buyers in particular may want to know) and ground-truthing of this database by NOAA Fisheries/Council, etc.
- Longer term tracking of export trends. <https://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/commercial-fisheries/foreign-trade/applications/trade-by-product>
- Better tracking of dogfish used/sold as fertilizer.
- Exploration of how spiny dogfish recovered so much faster than predicted (Could be useful for managing multiple other shark fisheries).
- Increased engagement with fishermen as part of scientific research.
- Better estimate of the population of male dogfish.

## Other Issues Raised

- There needs to be a clear division of male and female dogfish in terms of the assessment versus catch limits versus monitoring.
- The fishery needs a rapid regulatory fix for gear-based limits on dogfishing while monkfishing (being addressed in Monkfish Framework 9).
- A name change for spiny dogfish (“chipfish” has been suggested in addition to “cape shark”) could help the market, and could allow access to a prison protein market (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB122290720439096481>).
  - o Massachusetts advisers noted that “Cape Shark” is an approved market name ([http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/fdcc/?set=seafoodlist&id=Squalus\\_ acanthias&sort=SLSN&order=ASC&startrow=1&type=basic&search=dogfish](http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/fdcc/?set=seafoodlist&id=Squalus_ acanthias&sort=SLSN&order=ASC&startrow=1&type=basic&search=dogfish))

## Additional Advisor Electronic Comments

Two advisors were unable to attend but submitted the following comments to Council staff via email:

From Kevin Wark, F/V Dana Christine

- Dogfish were in great abundance last fall and winter and fishing for them was good and all the boats at Viking Village were able to obtain the trip limit without trouble.
- I do not support any trip limit changes at this point unless someone has marketing information that I am not aware of.
- The fishermen at Viking Village don't want to catch more for less money and would support a small trip limit change if the market would improve.
- As far as any gear questions or problems I will be glad to help in any way but everything looks like it's working well from my view as far as the functioning of the gillnet fishery off New Jersey.

From Dr. James Sulikowski

- I would make the research recommendation of a concurrent coast wide reproductive study. This might provide insight into the question "How was spiny dogfish able to recover so much faster than predicted? The answer could be useful for managing multiple other shark fisheries".
- Also I would suggest investigating ways in which to increase the quality of meat (i.e. how can it be processed on deck etc), which in turn would increase the price of the product. There is no shortage of dogfish and if we can get the price higher I think this would have a snow ball effect on the market etc.