



New England Fishery Management Council

News Release

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NE Fishery Council Approves Increase in Annual Dogfish Quota

Danvers, MA The New England Fishery Management Council (NEFMC) reacted to positive news about the status of spiny dogfish this week by approving a 200 percent increase in the federal quota for the small sharks. Following a decade of conservative management by the NEFMC and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council who are jointly responsible for management of the stock along the eastern seaboard outside of state waters, the New England Council approved an increase in the dogfish quota from four million pounds to 12 million pounds. The Mid-Atlantic Council will vote at its meeting scheduled for December 9-11 in Montauk, NY.

The change in rules was prompted by updated scientific advice that the spiny dogfish stock is neither overfished nor is overfishing occurring, an outcome anticipated by the Councils in 1998 when the Joint Spiny Dogfish Fishery Management Plan was implemented. The plan stated that if fishing mortality is substantially reduced and maintained at low levels, the dogfish stock could be rebuilt to levels which would allow sustainable harvests within 10 years.

Given this is the first year that information used to indicate the health of the stock has suggested it is rebuilt, the NEFMC followed the advice of a committee of technical advisors to be precautionary and approved the quota increase for the 2009 fishing year only. Vessel trip limits were set at 3,000 pounds for the same period which will begin next May.

During the expansion of the fishery in the early 1990s, mature females were targeted because of their large size. Spiny dogfish also were taken frequently as bycatch in the multispecies gillnet and otter trawl fisheries and discarded at sea because of their small size or lack of markets. They are eaten as fish and chips in Europe and are used for liver oil, vitamins, sand paper, leather and fertilizer.

Because the species is long-lived, slow growing and produces a relatively low number of pups annually, they are particularly vulnerable to overfishing. The intent of the Councils has been to rebuild the spawning stock biomass of the spiny dogfish stock to levels which will support the fisheries at long term, sustainable levels.

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