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MEMORANDUM

TO: Massachusetts Commercial Fishery Permit Holders

FROM: Paul Diodati, Director

DATE: August 22, 2006

SUBJECT: Update on Re-opening of a Directed Spiny Dogfish Fishery

The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (*Marine Fisheries*) requested at an August 15th meeting that the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's (ASMFC) Spiny Dogfish Policy Board reconsider its 2006 annual specifications to allow a directed fishery. The ASMFC Board tabled action on the proposal until its October meeting to enable review by the Technical Committee. While I remain committed to pursuing this timely issue, I also recognize the importance for states to agree on how to manage interstate fisheries. Such agreements are necessary not only to protect the resource, but to ensure everyone has equal opportunity to participate in the fishery. With that in mind, it's my decision to wait for the Board's decision on the proposal in October rather than have Massachusetts react unilaterally without the support of its partner states.

The current specifications limit the coastwide dogfish quota to 4-million pounds at a 600-pound daily trip limit. At the August 15th Board meeting, *Marine Fisheries* proposed raising the 2006 quota to 6-million pounds in 2006 under the previous regional sharing agreement (58% for ME, NH & MA and 42% for all states south) and increasing the daily trip limit up to 3,000 pounds. The proposal also asked for further quota increases in 2007 and beyond consistent with changes in stock conditions.

This proposal was driven by numerous factors that include new stock status information and fishery parameters showing that dogfish are currently not overfished and that overfishing is not occurring. Recent estimates suggest that total biomass has risen to 850,000 mt (1.87 billion pounds). Additionally, it's my belief that abundance of dogfish concentrated off the New England coast now threatens the success of rebuilding strategies for other fisheries, such as Atlantic cod, and hampers the conventional conduct of many other commercial and recreational fisheries.

The proposal, with technical committee comments, will return to the Board for action during its next meeting scheduled for October 22, 2006. Until then, all 2006 measures that regulate the Massachusetts commercial fishery for spiny dogfish remain in place without any change. Any questions about this fishery or the rules governing it could be directed to Melanie Griffin at 617.626.1528.