



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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Commissioner

DANIEL J. MCKIERNAN
Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission (MFAC)

FROM: Daniel J. McKiernan, Director 

DATE: December 14, 2023

SUBJECT: **Proposal to Increase Smooth Dogfish Commercial Trip Limit**

Proposal

DMF intends to go to public hearing this winter to increase the regulatorily established commercial trip limit for smooth dogfish from 100 pounds to 300 pounds.

Rationale

Recall that at the June 2023 business meeting, the Marine Fisheries Advisory Commission unanimously approved an in-season adjustment to increase the 2023 commercial trip limit for smooth dogfish from 100 pounds to 300 pounds. This responded to an industry request to allow commercial fishers—particularly those individuals participating in the summertime mixed species trawl fishery south of Cape Cod—to better access the underutilized smooth dogfish quota. I also indicated that DMF would make this in-season adjustment for 2023, review fishery performance this year, and consider adopting the 300-pound trip limit by regulation for 2024. While the 2023 landings data are confidential pursuant to G.L. c. 130, §21¹, I can say that several vessels took advantage of this trip limit increase in 2023 and we improved the utilization of the state's quota. For these reasons, I am in support of amending our smooth dogfish regulations to adopt the trip limit increase moving forward.

Background

In 2014, Addendum II to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Coastal Sharks implemented state-by-state quota allocations for smooth dogfish. These quota allocations were based on landings during 1998–2010, with Massachusetts receiving 0.433% of the coastwide quota. The addendum did not establish trip limits, but instead authorized states to do so in a manner that best meets their needs contingent on approval by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Coastal Sharks Management Board. Since 2007 (prior to Addendum II) and until the in-season adjustment was made earlier this year, Massachusetts smooth dogfish trip limit had been 100 pounds. Our smooth dogfish quota has been 17,195 pounds since 2017, and during the 2017–2022 period, less than 25% of the state's quota was landed each year, and as low as 4%. The Management Board approved our increase to a 300-pound trip limit in June 2023.

¹ G.L. c. 130, §21 requires DMF hold commercial and recreational fishing data collected by the agency "strictly confidential" except that such data may be released "in aggregate or summary form which does not directly or indirectly disclose the identity or business of any person who submits such statistics." To this we apply the so-called "rule of three" which requires any publicly disclosed data summary to include landings from at least three dealers, three harvesters, and three vessels.