

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL STATEMENT ON  
CONTROL DATE FOR LONGLINE SPINY DOGFISH FISHERY

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received a presentation from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and testimony from a Washington longline dogfish fisherman on a proposal to establish a control date for the longline spiny dogfish fishery.

After a great deal of discussion, the majority of the GAP recommends a control date not be established at this time. According to data provided, the longline spiny dogfish fishery has existed at a fairly stable level for a number of years, even though the mix of participants has changed. Under normal circumstances, the GAP would not expect vessel participation to increase given the number of processors willing to buy spiny dogfish. However, as several GAP members noted, past attempts to establish control dates in other fisheries have led to actual increases in vessel participation, with new entrants hoping to establish themselves before new regulations are promulgated. Under the time line provided by WDFW, the earliest an optimum yield and necessary catch limits could go into effect would be 2009, assuming a stock assessment was approved and completed in 2007. While this four-year time difference may meet the legal requirements for having a control date established close to the time of final regulatory action, it also provides several years when new entry could occur. This would seem to contradict the intent to provide continued stable fishing and processing opportunities in Washington.

Some GAP members were also concerned about the coastwide effects of establishing a control date as the first step in a regulatory process that seems designed to lead to having a special permitted fishery established. Members noted that spiny dogfish are found along much of the West Coast and are taken incidentally in several fisheries. The majority of the GAP would prefer to see a stock assessment completed, an optimum yield established, and appropriate catch limits developed which take into account all fishery sectors before starting a process that is helpful to only a small segment of the fishery.

A minority of the GAP supported the request for a control date. They disagreed with the concerns about attracting effort, noted the importance of the fishery to both the participating processors and fishermen and to the State of Washington, and suggested that having a control date would help stabilize the fishery.

PFMC  
04/07/05