PROCEEDINGS OF THE

ATLANTIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

SPINY DOGFISH MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Westin Crystal City
Arlington, Virginia
Hybrid Meeting

August 5, 2026

Approved November 11, 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Call to Order 1

Approval of Agenda 1

Approval of Proceedings 1

Public Comment 1

Consider Northern Region Conservation Equivalency Proposal 1
Proposed Weekly Trip Limit 1

Review Committee on Economics and Social Sciences Report on Commercial Fishery 5

Adjournment 10

INDEX OF MOTIONS

1. **Approval of agenda** by consent (Page 1).

2. **Approval of Proceedings of February 3, 2026** by consent (Page 1).

3. **Move to approve conservation equivalency for a Northern Region weekly aggregate trip limit of 37,500 pounds from September 1-December 31, 2026** (Page 3). Motion by Nichola Meserve; second by Renee Zobel. Motion passes by unanimous consent (Page 5).

4. **Move to adjourn** by consent (Page 10).

ATTENDANCE

Board Members

Megan Ware, ME, proxy for C. Wilson (AA)
Renee Zobel, NH (AA)
Doug Grout, NH (GA)
Dennis Abbott, NH, proxy for Sen. Watters (LA)
Nichola Meserve, MA, proxy for D. McKiernan (AA)
Raymond Kane, ME (GA)
Rep. Sarah Peake, MA (LA)
Nicole Lengyel Costa, RI, proxy for J. McNamee (AA)
Eric Reid, RI, proxy for Sen. Sosnowski (LA)
Shanna Madsen, CT (AA)
Bill Hyatt, CT (GA)
Rep. Joseph Gresko, CT (LA)
Jesse Hornstein, NY, proxy for M. Gary (AA)
Joe Cimino, NJ (AA)
Adam Nowalsky, NJ, proxy for Sen. Gopal (LA)
Jordan Zimmerman, DE (AA)
John Clark, DE, proxy for R. Miller (GA)
Michael Luisi, MD (AA)
Joe Grist, VA (AA)
Chris Batsavage, NC, proxy for M. Loeffler (AA)
Laura Deighan, NMFS

(AA = Administrative Appointee; GA = Governor Appointee; LA = Legislative Appointee)

Ex-Officio Members

Staff

Bob Beal
Toni Kerns
Tina Berger
Madeline Musante
Alexander Law
Caitlin Starks
Emilie Franke
Tracey Bauer
James Boyle
Chelsea Tuohy
Katie Drew
Jeff Kipp
Samara Nehemiah
Jainita Patel

The Spiny Dogfish Management Board of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission convened in the Jefferson Ballroom of the Westin Crystal City Hotel, Arlington, Virginia, via hybrid meeting, in-person and webinar; Wednesday, August 5, 2026, and was called to order at 9:45 p.m. by Chair Joe Cimino.

CALL TO ORDER

CHAIR JOE CIMINO: Obviously, we had some technical difficulties this morning. I think we're settling in. I'm going to call the Spiny Dogfish Management Board to order here. I am the Chair, Joe Cimino; most of you know me. I am the Administrative Commissioner from New Jersey.

I have James Boyle here with me. Just a quick spoiler alert, we're going to be with you a lot today, just to let you know, on that agenda. I am going to go to Toni before we do anything else to name the Commission members that are online. Toni, if you could do that for us.

MS. TONI KERNS: Can do, we have Chris Batsavasge, Ron Owens, Scott Wagemann, Russ Dize, Marina Owens and Sarah Peake, and then we also have Laura Deighan from NOAA Fisheries.

CHAIR CIMINO: Great, thank you, appreciate that and I think we had mic checks for everyone, so hopefully those Board members will be able to fully participate.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

CHAIR CIMINO: I will go on to our first agenda items, which are approval of the agenda. I'm sure everyone has had a chance to look at the agenda. Are there any additions or edits to the agenda? Not seeing any; we'll consider the agenda approved by unanimous consent.

APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS

CHAIR CIMINO: Move on to the proceedings from the February 2026 meeting. Does any Board member have any concerns with the proceedings, any edits? Not seeing any we will consider the proceedings from the February 2026 meeting approved by unanimous consent.

PUBLIC COMMENT

CHAIR CIMINO: I will take public comment now on any items not on the agenda for the Dogfish Board. No hands in the room, no hands online.

CONSIDER NORTHERN REGION CONSERVATION EQUIVALENCY PROPOSAL

CHAIR CIMINO: We will move on from public comment and go into our next agenda item; which is Consideration of the Northern Region Conservation Equivalency Proposal. This is an action item for us, so I will turn it over to James.

MR. JAMES BOYLE IV: We received a conservation equivalency proposal to test out a weekly trip limit as opposed to daily trip limits. As a quick reminder, the Northern Region daily trip limit is set by the Board during specifications, and is currently 7,500 pounds, which is also the same as the Federal Trip Limit.

PROPOSED WEEKLY TRIP LIMIT

MR. BOYLE: The Northern Region states, with the exception of Maine, submitted a conservation equivalency proposal to allow a weekly limit of 37,500 pounds, which is equivalent to five days under the daily trip limit, from September 1 to December 31 of this year, for just their federally permitted harvesters with the condition that if 80% of the region's quota is utilized then it will revert back to daily limit.

The proposal is also contingent on receiving a complementary exempted fishing permit from NOAA Fisheries, to allow those harvesters who participate in the program without the restriction of the federal daily limit, again which is 7,500 pounds. In applying for that permit there was an additional note.

It's not in the proposal in the materials, that it will be limited to 50 vessels and 4 trips per week, which represents slightly more than the number of

federally permitted vessels in the region, and about the average number of trips per week over the past two years. The Exempted Fishing Permit is under review, and comments are accepted until August 12.

This proposal comes in response to consistent underutilization of the Northern Region quota, with the goal to make trips more economically viable in the fall fishery, when the resource moves offshore, as well as provide information for future specifications. The Law Enforcement Committee first reviewed the proposal and provided a few comments. Overall, there were no objections.

They did note some minor concerns that it would be difficult to monitor a weekly limit at sea, and therefore it puts a little bit more burden on the shoreside monitoring. The PRT and TC met jointly, and the AP followed that up to provide their comments. The PRT and TC discussion focused around three questions. First was, what is there likely to be an increase in discards if the processor received large batches of landings that outpace their capacity?

Second was, are states able to ensure that a harvester can be monitored if they land in multiple states, that they don't exceed the weekly limit? The last was, were there any biological concerns for these larger trip limits, especially were any brought up in past proposals? To address the first question.

There was additional information from Massachusetts that a communications link directly between the processor and the harvesters is being developed that would allow them to let them know and prevent landings from exceeding capacity. For the second question, since the proposal only includes federally permitted harvesters, they have daily reporting requirements that can be monitored by every state in the Northern Region on a daily basis between all the states.

Finally, there were no biological concerns mentioned brought up to the PRT or TC, and in the discussion, they said past concerns revolved around market concerns that should be alleviated by the seasonality of the proposal being set for the fall fishery. The AP did not add any concern; they didn't have any concerns.

There was, John Whiteside echoed comments from the PRT and TC meeting that they are establishing that communication system between the processor and the harvesters. He additionally noted that this process had already been established in the state fishery, and so since there is a single processor for the coast, this should be a relatively simple system to set up. With that I'm happy to take any questions.

CHAIR CIMINO: Any question for James on this? Not seeing any in the room, Toni, do we have any online? Okay, not seeing any online. I'm not going to speak to the proposal. I appreciate the review of the proposal. I will just, as a state director, I think we have knowledge as state directors that some folks may not have.

That is just that the system of allowing transfers in and amongst states has just been fantastic for the utilization of the safe harvest levels for species like bluefish, dogfish, even menhaden, being able to move that around to where the fish are available. I personally fully support this proposal, and would like to see it move forward for those reasons.

We have a safe harvest level. This is a species that the migration pattern set it up, and I don't think that the danger of when New England is utilizing it would put southern states in any sort of jeopardy or challenge to how we manage this quota. Really appreciate the work that has gone into making this come forward. I'll just leave it at that, and this is an action item, so we are looking for a motion. I do see a hand from Joe Grist and then I'll go to Nichola.

MR. JOSEPH GRIST: Just a comment. I want to second what you just said, Mr. Chairman. The states involved they reached out to me a couple months ago about the idea. Obviously, Virginia has received quite a bit of quota transfer during the year from this.

We're fully supportive. We think that there is a way that can utilize their quota that best serves their industry. They can try and do it and see how this works out. That type of system wouldn't work well for my state, but it may work very well for theirs. If it works out well for them, we're fully supportive of this.

CHAIR CIMINO: Thank you, Joe. Nichola.

MS. NICHOLA MESERVE: Just regarding a transfer, I would be happy to make a motion and move this along. Part of the reason for the 80% quota used reverting back to the daily limit was to avoid any potential for quota overage, but also with the idea that it would likely still leave some quota available for transfer.

You know with the program ending no later than December 1, it would be in a timeframe that it could still be used elsewhere. There was thought into that, and hopefully this will resolve in both Northern Region quota utilization increasing as well as the coastwide quota, and supporting the process there. That said, I would be happy to make a motion, if you are ready, Mr. Chairman, to approve the conservation equivalency proposal.

CHAIR CIMINO: Yes, I think so, we didn't see any other hands for questions or comments, so yes, if you are ready.

MS. MESERVE: I would **move to approve conservation equivalency for a Northern Region weekly trip limit of 37,500 pounds from September 1 to December 31, 2026**.

CHAIR CIMINO: Second on the motion from Renee Zobel. Discussion on the motion. Yes, apologies, let's start with the maker and the seconder now.

MS. MESERVE: Not much to add, James did a great job laying out the overview of it and the comments on it. I guess I just wanted to reflect upon the CESS Report that is also on the agenda. We haven't gotten to it yet, but it really reiterates a number of the reasons for this proposal, finding that the fishery is contracting due to low core utilization, market and processing constraints and increased operating costs.

Fuel costs right now particularly are driving, I believe, some of the lower landings in this fishery. The CESS Report also found that greater flexibility through increased daily or weekly landing aggregates could be beneficial and generate the volume fishers need to offset the application cost and remain profitable.

It also had as a research recommendation the evaluation of daily versus weekly landing limits. I think this proposal is trying to achieve a number of things there in that CESS Report, and in a restricted manner with thought put into seasonality of it, not having great implications in other states fisheries as well. Just hope for the Board's support for this.

CHAIR CIMINO: Yes, thanks, I appreciate that, particularly because the meeting materials for the CESS Report came out kind of late, but our Committee on Economics and Social Sciences has provided a report on this. The timing of it is a bit awkward, since we're taking final action and then we're going to discuss that. But I appreciate you highlighting some of that. I'll go to Renee. Do you have anything to add on the motion?

MS. RENEE ZOBEL: Not really anything to add, just this is a thoughtful and creative approach to utilize a little bit more of the Northern Region quota. Nichola read it out beautifully, a lot of thought, we went back and forth quite a bit on iterations on how to approach this. Thanks to Nichola for leading the charge to try and engage our industry and do something to test a little more creativity.

CHAIR CIMINO: Any further discussion on the motion? We do have a hand online, Laura, did you have something to add?

MS. LAURA DEIGHAN: Yes, this is Laura Deighan with NOAA Fisheries. I just wanted to note that this same project is under consideration with GARFO. Process is that the applicant applies for an exempted fishing permit. We review the application, make sure that it has sufficient

information, and then we publish it in the Federal Register for public comment.

Once that comment period closes, we consider the information we received, and determine whether we can approve it or not. It's currently in the public comment phase. If anybody is interested in submitting public comments, you can go on Federalregister.gov, search for dogfish EFP, you might need to filter by year for 2026, and then you will be able to find that and submit any comments that you might have.

CHAIR CIMINO: Yes, thank you so, so much. That is also an important component of this, so for those of you that have not been tracking this idea, as Renee said, this kind of novel notion on how to deal with this. There is a proposal in the Federal Register right now open to public comment on an exempted permit to allow this.

I encourage anyone interested to look into that. If there aren't any other hands from the Board, I will go to the public. Certainly not trying to rush us here. Not seeing any hands around the table, Mike, did you have your hand up? Mike Luisi, go ahead.

MR. MICHAEL LUISI: I'm fully supportive of the motion, from everything that's already been said it falls in line with what I think is necessary. I'm thinking back a few years ago. I believe we've had a weekly trip limit conversation before. I could be wrong in that. Maybe somebody can remind me. I'm thinking back maybe a coordination with the Council and this Board, maybe during the time when I was Chair of the Council.

I just can't remember the years and the dates. But if this conversation has been had before, can someone, if they remember it, remind me of some of the problems and whether or not those problems were addressed through this proposal? Again, I'm comfortable with where we are and I'm going to support this, just a little information would be helpful if anyone remembers those times and those discussions.

CHAIR CIMINO: Appreciate that, Mike, I'm going to pause to see if there are any individuals that might respond to that. I'm not sure if Jason's online for the Council, but Nichola, did you have your hand up? Go ahead.

MS. MESERVE: My recollection, in terms of talking about either a larger daily limit or consideration of a weekly limit was, at the time where the landings coastwide were much higher, and that there were concerns about market implications and the processor capacity. But based on where we are now with the landings, I think that that concern no longer exists to the same degree as before. The open line of communication between the harvesters and the processors will help to avoid that, should they see a risk.

CHAIR CIMINO: Good, Mike, okay thank you, appreciate that. Not seeing any other hands from Board members, I will open it up to the public. I believe John Whiteside had his hand up. John, go ahead.

MR. JOHN WHITESIDE: Thank you, good morning. I was, as you mentioned earlier, I was a part of the MAFMC Dogfish AP meeting yesterday. I am in support of that, and also Pierre Juillard spoke in support as well, he is the primary person from East Coast Noyes Sea Trade on the last remaining processor.

I do want to point out that there was quite a bit of confusion with the way this was worded in the Federal Register, and there were a number of fishermen who spoke, thinking that this was 37,500 pounds per trip, and that they could make 4 trips. I tried to clarify that, but I think if there is a way to have some clarifying statement on this that would be great, even if it was just when the like the press release afterwards and also highlighting that when the 80% of the northern TAL is reached, then it reverts back to the standard trip limit. I think that would help in alleviating as much of the concern and questions that were raised yesterday.

CHAIR CIMINO: Thank you, John, I really appreciate those comments. I can't lift the floor in the room,

but I'm assuming that NOAA is taking note, and staff here at ASMFC are as well. That is something that we can do to the press release and assuming that NOAA as well will make sure that that clarification is part of what happens as we move forward. Appreciate that. Not seeing any other hands online. It doesn't look like it. I'll look to the Board on final action on this. Is there any objection to the motion to moving this forward? Yes, go ahead.

MR. ERIC REID: Given the last little discussion, does the motion need to be changed that says weekly aggregate limit as opposed to weekly trip limit, which is the point of the confusion? Does that need to change?

CHAIR CIMINO: I think if there is, but obviously first and foremost it is part of the public record, but if there is no objection to putting that in the motion, it can only help in clarity, I would assume then. We can do that as a friendly to add aggregate.

MS. MESERVE: I would be fine with that amendment to it.

CHAIR CIMINO: Okay, so we are putting that in the motion and I will just look around quickly if there are any concerns or comments on that addition. Hopefully that helps clarify things, and as I mentioned, we will do our best to clarify if this motion gets approved, in the press release that that is the intent here and I guess whatever Mel can do on the Federal Register to also. If they have any inquiries to also make sure that is clear. Okay, not seeing any concerns with the addition to the motion, so one last call.

Any objections to the motion? Not seeing any we will consider that motion approved by unanimous consent. Thank you, everybody. I hope this is a help to the industry and I think all the states will continue to work together on this.

REVIEW COMMITTEE ON ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES REPORT ON COMMERCIAL FISHERY

CHAIR CIMINO: With that I will go to our next agenda item, which is a review from the Committee on Economics and Social Sciences, and so we have a report. Tara is coming up, so Tara Scott will be here to present that, as Nichola gave us a bit of a preview on some of that, so appreciate that and Tara, welcome.

DR. TARA SCOTT: Thank you, my name is Tara Scott, in my day job I work for NOAA Fisheries, but I am here representing the CESS. As I was saying, I work for NOAA, but I am here representing the CESS, to help provide a little bit more practical insight to guide you through your future management decisions.

Apologies for the late briefing, but hopefully it will still continue to support future management. In the fall of 2025, the CESS was tasked with looking at available socioeconomic information for the commercial fishery to help it with the assessment of low quota, and then potentially adjustments to the trip levels. I'm just going to walk you through sort of our general approach, what we've done for other Boards, a review of the literature, and then because the literature is rather old, we decided to do a snapshot of the fishery, just to provide a little bit more of current conditions, and then our recommendations for future research. As I mentioned, our approach is similar, we did not do an extensive analysis but if you need additional analyses then the Committee will be able to help with those in the future.

You guys are very well aware of the fishery, so I am not going to go over that. But I think it's really important to understand that this fishery is driven by two different very distinct markets. Domestically it is a very low consumer driven food grade product. It is mainly used for bait for fertilizer or for biomedical purposes.

Whereas, internationally it is a completely different story. The European Union and the United Kingdom, it is highly sought for as a white fish substitute, so it is commonly used in things like fish and chips, and then in Germany it is used for the belly flaps, which is where the premium price comes in, sort of this belly flaps and in the fresh market.

Again, most of the product is frozen, just because in order to get it overseas air shipment cost, and then freighter is pretty high, so it tends to be frozen. Because of the ex-vessel price, the price that were seeing at the dock is so low, many of these harvesters are having to catch the large volume of fish, just to make ends meet, and so they are bumping up against the daily limit just to try to break even.

Catching more fish for them unfortunately is not translating in to making more money. As I mentioned their literature is pretty old, but we found three relevant pieces of analyses that were done specifically for the spiny dogfish fishery. Looking at the global demand, the relationships and then also a paper by one of my fellow CESS members, Mike Carroll and his colleague Wiersma.

I am going to go through sort of what those say first, and then we'll transition into the current conditions. Starting first with the Del'Apa Paper, which was in 2013, it used a social network analysis, which is basically just sort of mapping how people, groups, organizations sort of connect with one another.

The study really highlighted the tension that goes on between those long-term biological rebuilding goals that mix with more of the short-term social and economic goals that managers are constantly faced with. The research also highlighted that there is this critical dynamic between the European Union and the UK, and the fact that they hold a significant part of the market leverage.

That is because historically 90% of the global demand has been supplied by the U.S. fishery. Of that 90% that we are supplying, that we were supplying to the European market and the Asian market, about 90% of that was directly consumed by the European Union, so that type of demand really drives our domestic prices that we're receiving at the dock.

When the U.S. restricts its exports, whether that be through quota restrictions or through logistic hurdles, obviously the folks in the UK and Europe are not stopping eating dogfish, what they are doing is they are looking for those whitefish substitutes or they are potentially looking for a supply from other countries that may often have either unregulated or less regulated fisheries. Typically, the supply was coming from South America, Africa or Asia. Like I said, once we shift away or we reduce our market shares, it is very hard to get that back, and that has been quite evident over the most recent years.

The next paper was again by Del'Apa and colleagues. What they found was that as I've already sort of mentioned, that once you move away from these markets, the foreign markets, so once we've lost our market share in the European Union, they are finding the other substitutes, it is going to be very hard to come back from that.

While we have biologically succeeded in helping to ensures a sustainable stock, at the same time it was at the loss of sort of crucial processing capacity, because it was felt that it wasn't needed, because they couldn't ensure a consistent inflow of product in order to provide that supply to the foreign market, or there was no longer a need for it.

This sort of brings us to sort of that critical economic constraint in the fishery, it's really a processing bottleneck and not what Del'Apa found was operationally dogfish meat has to be processed within a certain window of time, and because it is already a large volume, low market fishery it is forcing fishermen to land large volumes, to sort of make sure that they are maintaining economic viability at that trip level.

Unfortunately, with the loss of the southern processing infrastructure, it meant that there was not enough capacity to handle that flow coming in. Del'Apa concluded that the management actions need to consider the sort of through put when they are looking to adjust the volume, whether that is through trip limits or through quota.

If you don't consider those, then you are going to have significant inefficiency. Finally, the third paper, again from our CESS colleague Wiersma and

Carroll. This was the most recent study, it was in 2018, and this was commissioned by the state of Massachusetts. It looked at more of the global demand and looking at the processing capacity issue.

What they found was that there was an absolute cap, not only on the global demand but also on the daily throughput in the processing sector. They found that sort of the sweet spot or where we were getting ready to over supply the market, and crash prices was about 20 million pounds annually. That was the global market threshold.

Then on a daily threshold rate the processing sectors could take in about 120,000 pounds per day, before they experienced inventory glut. Anything after that amount, the price would drop drastically at around 40%. For a fishery where they are already receiving relatively low, around 22 cents a pound, a 40% drop in ex-vessel price, I mean the story tells itself.

Again, 2018 there was an issue of potential over supply, flooding the market, causing the price to drop, simply that is not the case anymore. The study mentioned that if you simply raise the trip limits without considering the processing capacity, again, you would financially harm the fishers, because of this potential for a price crash. Again, because that was 2018 when the study was done there is a lot of management actions that have occurred, a lot of changes in the market. I wanted to provide a quick snapshot of 2019 to 2024. Again, this was sort of the window of times that we also had complete data for. But over this time period as the slide suggests, it has been a fishery that is contracting, and is continually contracting.

Over the time period volume has fell sharply with a 51% drop, over a 51% drop in landings, from 17.4 million in 2019 down to 8.4 million in 2024. We're seeing a drop in participation. The number of vessels has reduced from 248 down to 142, and that is a vessel that has any spiny dogfish landings, that is not saying that they are a directed vessel.

Then the number of active dealers that are actually buying spiny dogfish has also contracted from 58 pounds to just 39. We see for the fleet dynamics this concentration of effort. As I said, we see the decline. It is even more notable when you look for the vessels and the fishers who are primarily harvesting or directing on spiny dogfish.

There were 22 vessels in 2019 that harvested more than half of the landings. In 2024 that number is down to 13, so 13 vessels who are catching 50% of the landings. Then in terms of how these fish are caught, again it is primarily dominated by bottom gillnet fishing. Over the last five years about 77% of the catch had been landed with bottom gillnet.

The other issues that the data revealed was that there is a geographic shift. Again, this does not come as a surprise, but because of the loss of processor capacity an infrastructure in the southern region, we have seen a decline. Historically North Carolina was a major percent with over 1.1 million pounds of landings in 2019.

At the time that we processed and pulled the data in 2024, they had just at 160,000 pounds, that is pretty substantial. Seeing that shift, again highlights the coordination that needs to happen between the processing and the harvesting sector for this fishery. The loss of the southern fleet has left most of the rest of the fleet entirely dependent on just a few buyers.

The few remaining processors, as it's been noted in the Mid-Atlantic Council reports and their APs, there is a single large processor if it is still operating. This creates what we economists call a monopsony, which is where it is a market condition where there are many sellers, so there are many fishers, but there are very few buyers.

They are able to sort of control the price, but they are also able to control the flow, and how much is being accepted. Because the buyers have limited labor and freezer space, they can impose these daily or weekly catch limits that are sort of artificially suppressing effort across the fleet. Just for awareness for the top three processors, they are

doing about 67% of all of the landings. Again, a majority of that is flowing through that single large processor.

A lot has happened since 2018 when Mike Carroll and his colleague did their research on the processing sector. I want to be very careful in how we use the literature in order to inform you on future management measures. From the papers we saw that the assumptions were that there was going to remain sort of this high level of quota and a potential for over supply. Obviously, that is no longer an issue. We now are seeing under-utilization of the resource, so it is not biologically constrained it seems to be processing constrained by the logistics. But also, several events have happened, Brexit, COVID, you have tightening restrictions on sustainability standards with a high MSE cost and the certification and the costs that go along with that, so that single processor.

There are a lot of things that have happened, not just in the domestic fleet but also in the global market that make these not as easily translated into the current conditions that we see today. Taking that information and sort of trying to figure out how best to provide information to you.

We can sort of say with some clarity that while quotas are currently far below that global over supply level, it's a further loss of the infrastructure for processing means that those bottlenecks still exist, and that still can trigger those market corrections during peak landing times, so still cautioning on that.

At the last Board meeting in February, Mr. Didden showed that the ex-vessel prices were sort of stabilizing at around 20 to 22 cents per pound. But when you adjust that for inflation they have substantially declined. As other Commissioners have noted, the price of fuel has gone up considerably over the last year, which is also further constraining the resources and the possibility of these fishermen.

For fishermen again, they are sort of caught in this really difficult position, where their faced with these rising overhead costs; fuel, transportation cost in North Carolina, Virginia, other southern states having to truck that up to the processor is an added cost, and so making sure that you are considering those costs that are being borne to the southern fleet compared to those in others should also be considered.

I just wanted to also note that right now we have underutilization occurring, which drives inconsistent flow to the processors. In these low quota conditions, it is sort of allowing. It should be noted that if you allow fishers to sort of combine these trips, to manage these sorts of weekly volume flows, then they are able to help offset that transportation cost, and sort of combine their trips.

Get it together within a particular window of time that will allow them either to be part of the fresh product or part of the frozen, depending on how far away they are. But it has to be in coordination with that processor, so that they don't have that over supply creating that glut, and then again dropping down that ex-vessel price.

Given all of these conditions, sort of similar to the conclusion in the literature, so any adjustment to the volume of harvest you should consider that processing threshold. Then in terms of future research needs, again this is kind of our wish list, that we know that obviously a lot of key things can't happen without proper funding.

But we think that it is really important that the limitation on this fishery really is no longer biological. It is not about how many fish there are, it's really about that critical loss of market access into the European Market, and then the collapsing processing infrastructure that helps to have that flow of product into the market. To inform any of the decisions, we think it would be really important to focus on sort of the harvest that they are again getting a better idea of the vessel expenses, the fuel, the off-loading fees, overland transport fees, as well as the fleet's financial dependency on the stock. Many of these fishermen do not fish dogfish all year long, again because it is usually along the coast.

What other opportunities are available and what contributes to their portfolio when dogfish are not available. It is also important for the infrastructure piece of the processors to really understand what their current capacity is. Again, the threshold that was provided in the Wiersma/Carroll paper was 120,000 pounds a day.

There needs to be a study that sort of looks independently at what that new level is, and if additional quota or weekly limits are considered, would they be able to handle that capacity? That would need additional work; predicative modeling, market power analysis, which is really investigating the dealer's ability to sort of set that price and set those artificial sorts of daily or weekly limits, so that would be important.

Then, looking at the global flow. Again, the 2018 paper was the last paper, but there have been a lot of events that have gone on that changed that dynamic, so it would be really helpful for another analysis to determine if that 20-million-pound threshold still stands, or if there is additional room for U.S. to increase our current market share, should stocks recover and quota increase.

Then finally, one of my colleagues at NOAA reminded me that sometimes dogfish are seen as a nuisance species, and so it might be important to consider other ecological tradeoffs or impacts to higher value fisheries and what is the value associated with ensuring the population remains sustainable but does not adversely impact other fisheries as well. That would be an area that the CESS would support looking at as well. With that I will take any questions.

CHAIR CIMINO: I really appreciate the work that the CESS did on this. I think for the Commission dogfish is somewhat unique. You know you just kind of hit on some of the ecological concerns which are always there. But I think this is one of those species, unlike the Mid-Atlantic Council, which has several that there isn't a rec component to. The environmental concerns are different than we deal with in a lot.

This part of it, being able to focus on the economics of this commercial fishery is so important. It is something that both the Mid and the Commission have been working on. I really appreciate all the work that the CESS has done and for those of you that play the Six Degrees of Separation from Joe Cimino in the fisheries world, Tara and I are direct contact. While she was finishing up her PhD at VIMS we worked together at VMRC. Thank you for the presentation, Tara. Any questions for Dr. Scott? Go ahead, John Clark.

MR. JOHN CLARK: Thank you for the presentation, Tara, very interesting. Just curious when the stock went down so much and there wasn't as much export to the EU. I know attempts were made to develop a domestic market. If it's a high value product, why has it been so difficult to develop alternate markets, other than just the UK and the EU?

DR. SCOTT: Yes, thank you for your question. The Wiersma and Carroll paper did discuss trying to drive demand in the domestic market. Unfortunately, a lot of that development, the consumer demand is just not here in the U.S. The connotation associated with shark in general, most people are, if they see it on a menu, if it even shows up on a menu, it is very low presence in the domestic market.

I believe there was some development to try to get it for use in like institutionalized for education, prison systems, even industrialized biomedical. But from the reading of the literature and from most of the information I've read, that that development is not well funded and so it has not increased since 2018. Again, there are other supply chain issues. But even if we were able to process, even if there was demand domestically for it, we still don't have the processing capacity, especially in the southern region, in order to support that.

CHAIR CIMINO: Further questions, Mike Luisi.

MR. LUISI: Thank you for the presentation. Just curious. You mentioned that the EU has very high sustainability standards that need to be followed. If

we are supplying that product we need to follow those standards. I'm just curious what you might understand regarding when our product from the United States is no longer available or it is cut off. Does the EU hold Asian countries, African countries and South American countries to those same standards? They seem to have used that as a secondary market to fill the void, but I am just curious as to whether or not they are held to those standards. I am assuming they are not, but I'm curious.

DR. SCOTT: My specialty is domestic fishing not foreign global trade. But from what I read in the literature, the EU still has its higher standards. If they would just be substituting with another white fish, it may not be dogfish. Whereas, Asian countries or South American countries may not have those same standards. It's providing that supply into those other areas, and the European Market is taking basically the U.S. higher standards MSE Certified product.

CHAIR CIMINO: Further questions? Okay, not seeing any around the table. I will look to the public online and in the room. I see a hand; there is a public mic. If you could introduce yourself, I would appreciate it, thank you.

MS. SONJA FORDHAM: Sonja Fordham, Shark Advocates International, nice to see you. Thank you for the presentation. I apologize if I missed some, they are hard to see from back here, but I am going to have a closer look later. I just wanted to say, in response to EU trade standards, EU certainly has high trade standards when it comes to CITES listed species, spiny dogfish not yet listed under CITES. My recollection there was some kerfuffle a number of years ago about the standards EU has for mercury, and there was a study that set them off for mercury. I'm not sure if I'm remembering that right. What I really wanted to say is, I think in addition to, it's not just this loss of access to markets, I would say, but also changing markets. I don't think that fried belly flaps are all the rage in German beer gardens like they used to when we first started them back in the 1990s. But mainly I just wanted to flag a report on global trade and shark meat that is being read by scientists at Dalhousie that is in its final stages. I was trying to check from the authors if they had a date, but don't have a date yet, but should be coming out. I think that it's pretty close, and that it should shed some light on the situation. Thank you.

DR. SCOTT: Yes, we have noticed, again most of the literature is pre-2019, and so we only had a little bit of information to go on. That is why we recommend another global demand analysis be conducted, and additional research in that area, to have a better understanding of what the current conditions are.

CHAIR CIMINO: Thank you both, thank you for the comments and thank you, Tara. I think we had one other hand; I believe John Whiteside had his hand up. Go ahead, John.

MR. WHITESIDE: I've only been involved in the fishery for 22 years now, and in that time, there has been no mercury issues regarding spiny dogfish in the EU. I also would dispute that belly flaps are not popular in Germany's beer gardens. But we would look for better science in the U.S. in getting accurate surveys of what the biomass actually is. The industry as a whole is extremely skeptical at the very low numbers that are reported.

CHAIR CIMINO: Appreciate the comment. Back to us, James, this was informational. Is there anything in particular that we are looking for on that? No, okay. Once again, appreciate the work of the Committee. I think we've been seeing more in the last year or two from you guys, and that is fantastic.

ADJOURNMENT

CHAIR CIMINO: Thank you so much, I appreciate that. With that we will move on to our last agenda item. Is there any other business to come before Spiny Dogfish Board? Not seeing any, with that we can adjourn, as long as there are not any objections. No objection, so we will adjourn.

(Whereupon the meeting adjourned at 10:38 a.m. on Wednesday, August 5, 2026)