

Applicants Sought for Potential Pilot Program Authorizing a Weekly Aggregate Spiny Dogfish Limit

The Connecticut Marine Fisheries Program is soliciting interest from commercial permit holders to participate in a potential pilot program that would authorize a weekly aggregate limit of spiny dogfish. Specifically, the pilot program would allow participants to land up to 37,500 pounds of spiny dogfish per calendar week (using a maximum of four trips per week) rather than 7,500 pounds per trip, beginning as early as September 1 and extending through December 31, 2026, unless 80% of the Northern Region (ME–CT) Spiny Dogfish Commercial Quota is taken sooner. Initiation of the pilot program is contingent upon NOAA Fisheries' approval of a federal Exempted Fishing Permit application submitted jointly by the states of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut and currently under review. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission recently approved the states' mutual proposal to authorize the experimental weekly limit in state waters.

Eligibility is restricted to vessels that hold a valid Federal spiny dogfish commercial fishing permit and are authorized to fish for, possess, and land spiny dogfish for commercial purposes in New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island or Connecticut. Each state is soliciting interest from its own permit holders; vessels permitted to land spiny dogfish in multiple of the involved states should only apply to participate through one state. Among all states, total participation is expected to be capped at 50 vessels. Applicants may be disqualified based on their enforcement and reporting timeliness history. All participants will follow the federal permit holder requirement to submit Vessel Trip Reports (VTRs) electronically within 48 hours after entering port.

Connecticut commercial fishing license holders interested in participating in the pilot program should provide the following information by email to deep.marine.fisheries@ct.gov as soon as possible, but no later than August 25, 2026:

1. License holder name and mailing address Vessel name, USCG documentation number, and hull number
2. Connecticut license plate number
3. Federal vessel permit number
4. Operator name and federal operator permit number (include all potential operators)

This information will be submitted to NOAA Fisheries for consideration in the issuance of an Exempted Fishing Permit.

Spiny dogfish are managed jointly by the Atlantic coastal states through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, and NOAA Fisheries. The interstate and federal plans collectively establish a 58% share of the coastwide quota and a 7,500-pound trip limit for Northern Region fishery participants. However, this trip limit may be contributing to underutilization of the Northern Region's quota and contraction within the fishery. The weekly aggregate limit pilot program is intended to examine if greater regulatory flexibility will provide for more economically viable fishing trips and enhanced quota utilization, particularly in the fall as the resource moves further from shore. Information collected during the pilot

program may also inform future setting of trip limits. Prospective Connecticut applicants seeking more information may contact Matthew Gates (matthew.gates@ct.gov, 860.876.4393).

For complete information on commercial fishing regulations please see: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/fishing/commercial/marinecirpdf.pdf>, or contact the DEEP Marine Fisheries Program by email at deep.marine.fisheries@ct.gov, by mail at PO Box 719, Old Lyme, CT 06371 or leaving a voicemail at 860.434.6043 between the hours of 8:30 AM and 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday.

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