

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 6, 2006

Dr. William T. Hogarth, Director
National Marine Fisheries Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Dr. Hogarth:

We are writing to request that your agency fully analyze the impacts that the current management of spiny dogfish and efforts to rebuild that stock are having on finfish, squid, and other valuable stocks targeted by commercial and recreational fishermen.

As you are likely aware, fishermen have noted the increasing presence of these voracious predators in Atlantic waters. Spiny dogfish are opportunistic predators that feed on a number of other species. While we recognize that there may be biological reasons to restrict the harvesting of dogfish, it is critical that NMFS examine the impacts that such large populations of spiny dogfish are having on efforts to maintain healthy populations of other species. This is clearly a case where an ecosystem-based approach to management should be applied.

It is also clear that more funding and research efforts need to be devoted to understanding this particular species and its interactions with other stocks. Earlier this year, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council considered the possibility of developing a male-only dogfish fishery, but concluded that they did not have enough data to consider whether such a move would be successful.

New Jersey fishermen are encountering spiny dogfish more and more frequently and are seeing firsthand their impacts on other stocks, yet NMFS continues to argue that these small sharks are in trouble. We urge you to address this disparity in perception by closely reviewing the management of spiny dogfish and increasing research efforts.

We look forward to hearing from you concerning this critical fisheries management issue and hope that we can continue to work together on this and other matters.

Sincerely,


FRANK PALLONE, JR.
Member of Congress


FRANK LAUTENBERG
United States Senator


ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator



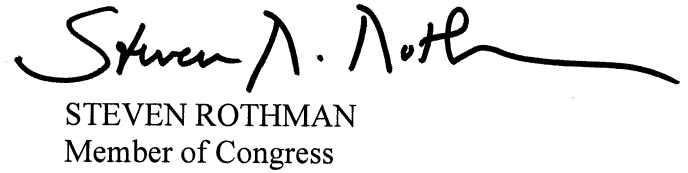
JAMES SAXTON
Member of Congress



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