

Hon. Jon S. Corzine, Governor  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0001

Dear Governor Corzine,

As a response to the impact of their ever-increasing population of spiny dogfish (they made up 66% of the total catch in the NMFS annual trawl survey of the waters off the Northeastern states over the winter of 2005) on other fisheries, on January 30<sup>th</sup> of this year the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) took action to increase the 2006/2007 quota to 6 million pounds and set state trip limits at 3000 pounds. We are requesting that you initiate an emergency rule or legislation to change the state commercial fishing regulations for the spiny dogfish fishery to come into compliance with the ASMFC management plan. This would allow New Jersey fishermen the opportunity to harvest their share of the quota increase approved by the ASMFC.

The current trip limit, 500 lbs, makes it impractical to land spiny dogfish, which are present in Mid-Atlantic waters at historically high levels. Immediate action by you and the Department of Environmental Protection to bring New Jersey into compliance, implementing the higher trip limit, would allow for both a directed dogfish fishery and the harvest and sale of dogfish incidentally caught in other fisheries. The benefits of this action, while accruing to New Jersey's commercial fishermen, will extend to the recreational fishery as well.

Members of New Jersey's coastal delegation have already acknowledged the possible impacts of predation by spiny dogfish on our most valuable commercial and recreational fisheries. It's increasingly common to catch targeted species that have been partially consumed by ravenous schools of dogfish, in many instances making fishing in what have been traditionally productive areas all but impossible. They also make "catch and release" fishing all but impossible, attacking fish as soon as they are released.

While the research has yet to be done, it is thought by people who are knowledgeable about our local fisheries that spiny dogfish predation is one of the major factors preventing the expected increases in the populations of other species such as fluke and weakfish.

But the effects of the massive numbers of dogfish off our coast extend far beyond their predation on other, more desirable species. Their overwhelming abundance causes them to interfere with fishermen targeting these other species, "clogging" commercial gear and taking baits meant for more desirable fish.

The states of Virginia and North Carolina have already made changes to their state regulations, allowing their fishermen to take advantage of the increased quota. They will be creating a history of landings that will be to their advantage when state-by-state quotas are considered by the ASMFC. In fact, the State of Virginia harvested over one million pounds of dogfish during the 2006 portion of the fishing year. (Attached you will find Virginia's announcement) If there is no increased quota in New Jersey, New Jersey's fishermen will be prevented from participating in this potentially valuable fishery into the future.

Our request is fully supported by the Recreational Fishing Alliance, and we are confident that virtually every recreational angler and recreational fishing group will support it as well. Along with the commercial fishermen, they are suffering from the overabundance of this voracious predator.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Scot Mackey  
Garden State Seafood Association