

Interim Results for Northeast Multispecies Sector Program

Release

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How do catch share programs affect fish stocks, fishermen, fishing businesses, and fishing communities?

We are pleased to announce [the first report of interim results](#) for the Northeast groundfish fishery from the five-year Measuring the Effects of Catch Shares project, which is dedicated to providing objective, scientifically sound information to help answer that vital question. One of our major goals is to make the data and findings publicly available in a web-based, interactive format that is accessible to all interested parties, and today's release is another step toward that goal.

Using a collaborative approach involving the private sector, university scientists, and government agencies, the Measuring the Effects of Catch Shares project team gathers and analyzes data for a set of 14 key measurements, or indicators, of change in the years before and during the catch share programs. The indicators are based on the best available data and are designed to answer key questions about economic, social, ecological, and administrative conditions and trends. We selected the 14 indicators following consultation with more than a hundred stakeholders and scientific experts.

The Measuring the Effects of Catch Shares project does not advocate for or against catch shares. It provides reliable, data-driven, neutral information that people can use to answer their own questions and inform their own decisions about catch shares. It is the first web-based catch share information project to present data on a variety of trends in one place.

At the conclusion of the five-year project, we will release a complete set of indicator results for two U.S. catch share programs: (1) the West Coast Shorebased Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program implemented in 2011 in the West Coast groundfish trawl fishery and (2) the Northeast Multispecies Sector Program implemented in 2010. During the project, we will be releasing interim results periodically as data become available and analysis is completed.

Featured in today's release is an initial set of interim results for the Northeast Multispecies Sector Program. Because the catch share program is so new, it is too soon to say whether changes observed in its first year or two have resulted from implementation of catch shares or other influences. Effects of a catch share program will almost certainly play out for years, perhaps decades, and it will be some time before effects of the program can be reported fully.

Consequently, this first report focuses primarily on the period from 2002 to 2009, covering eight fishing years before the catch share program began. In some cases where longer-term data were available, the results span a longer baseline period. These results are important because they show the status and trends of fish stocks, fishermen, fishing businesses, and fishing communities prior to catch shares.

Throughout the Measuring the Effects of Catch Shares project, we will be comparing new results against the baseline period.

In addition to the baseline period, this set of interim results covers the first years of the Northeast Multispecies Sector Program for those indicators for which the necessary data are currently available. Where possible, the project has offered its findings and analysis of available data, but we have not drawn final conclusions yet based on these interim results.

Please visit the project website to see the complete interim results for the Northeast groundfish catch share program: <http://catchshareindicators.org/>

The following are examples of the findings to date:

- Number of Active Vessels: The number of vessels active in the groundfish fishery was in decline before the catch share program began, and the decline continued in the first few years of the catch share program.
- Groundfish Revenues: During the first three years of the Sector Program, groundfish gross revenues were about 18 percent lower than the annual average for the previous three-year period (2007-2009), despite higher prices for important species such as Atlantic cod and haddock.
- Ratio of Catch to Total Allowable Catch (TAC): Since the Sector Program began in 2010, there have been no TAC overages, and there have been frequent TAC underages. The average ratio of catch to TAC across all stocks has ranged between 40 and 56 percent. Each year, catches were less than half of TAC for 25 to 45 percent of the allocated stocks.
- Discards: For all methods of estimating discard ratios, the lowest discard rate for all years of the baseline period and the catch share program occurred in 2011. However, that low point was followed by an increase in 2012.

Currently, the results are presented in the form of interactive charts, which enable users to explore the data and to dig deeper into the results, and technical descriptions of the findings. In the coming months and years, we will provide additional reporting formats to make the results accessible and useful for a range of audiences, and the reports will be updated with new data. The website at catchshareindicators.org will become a dashboard of sorts for monitoring changes in the catch share fisheries.

We hope that you and your colleagues find this first report of interim results to be insightful and useful, while recognizing the results will continue to evolve throughout the Measuring the Effects of Catch Shares project. Please [subscribe to our email](#) list to receive project updates (future emails will only be sent to subscribers) and follow us on Twitter (@catchsharestudy). We welcome your feedback.

The [Measuring the Effects of Catch Shares project](#) is led by MRAG Americas, Inc., and is conducted with a team of academic and private-sector partners.