



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE



For more information on the
Surf Clam and Ocean
Quahog ITQ program:

<http://www.mafmc.org/fmp/history/scoq.htm>

<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/sfd/clams>

Catch Share Spotlight No. 8

Surf Clam and Ocean Quahog ITQ

Vital Stats

First year: 1990

Type of Catch Share Program: ITQ

Management units: Atlantic Surf Clams, Ocean Quahogs

Vessels / Gear types: Mostly larger vessels with hydraulic clam dredges - landings in standard cages with cage tags. There is a small fishery for ocean quahogs within the Maine Mahogany Quahog Zone, north of 43°50' N. lat. that is not part of the ITQ program and is fished with non-hydraulic dredge gear.

Available Trend Data

Season length:

Before Program: Six hours every other week

After Program: Year-round

Ex-vessel value:

Before Program (1990): ~ \$44 M

After Program (2007): ~ \$49 M (worth \$30.8 million in 1990 value)

Consolidation

(1990-1997): 74% reduction in surf clam fishery; 40% in ocean quahog fishery.

Stock status:

Before Program (1990): Overfishing: NO; Overfished: NO

After Program (2008): Overfishing: NO; Overfished: NO

Nature of Harvest Privilege

Eligibility: No foreign ownership but otherwise anyone can buy and fish quota.

Duration: Open ended. Council can end program through the normal Council process.

Transferability: Fully tradable and there has been an active leasing market.

Accumulation: No control parameters (Amendment 15 will address this issue).

Initial Allocation: Initial ITQ shares of the fishery quota were issued to vessel owners based on a formula of historical catches (80%) and vessel size (20%).

Management

Identified Costs: \$274,000.

Cost recovery: Pending (Amendment 15 to address).

Monitoring: Cage-tagging requirement and mandatory reporting to NMFS by vessel owners and dealers of clams landed and purchased. Allocation permit numbers must be reported on both vessel logbook reports and dealer-processor reports. Dealers and processors must have annual permits. Enforcement relies heavily on shore-side surveillance, the cage tag system, and cross-checking logbooks between vessels and processors. At-sea and air surveillance is conducted to reduce the possibility that vessels with state permits or cage tags may stray into federal waters.



For additional Catch Share
Spotlights in this series go to:

<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/catchshares>

Questions, comments or need
more information? Contact us
via email at:

catchshares@noaa.gov

Summary

The Mid-Atlantic surf clam and ocean quahog fishery exists from New England down to the Virginia coast. The fishery targets two species of clams which sometimes have overlapping territories. In the 13 years preceding the adoption of the Surf Clam and Ocean Quahog ITQ system, the surf clam fishery was managed through limited entry, quarterly quotas, and fishing time restrictions. But by the mid-1980s, effort limitations combined with overcapacity meant that capacity utilization in this fishery was at an all time low with vessels operating only 6 hours every other week in 1990.

An individual transferable quota (ITQ) system was established in 1990 by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council; the first ITQ program in a federal U.S. fishery. Within two years, the ITQ program led to a substantial reduction in fleet size (54%) and increased capacity utilization (150%). While economic efficiency improved, this consolidation meant that labor was displaced (particularly non-vessel owning captains and crew). Shares were designed to be traded or leased to any person or entity, with no pre-conditions of vessel ownership or limits on the amount of ITQ shares owned by an entity. Without restrictions on ownership of ITQ shares, market consolidation and existing vertical integration have increased over time.