



NOAA
FISHERIES

Northeast
Fisheries
Science Center

Understanding Impacts on Fishermen and their Families from Southern New England Catch Shares

Patricia M. Clay, Lisa L. Colburn and Lauren Downs

March 26, 2013

Background on Northeast Groundfish Fishery

- One of the region's earliest and still the largest fishery in the Northeast (~1300 active vessels in 2011)
- Currently 13 species included
- Species ranges cover Maine to Delaware (and into Canada)
- Total gross revenues = \$330.9 million (\$90.1 million common pool and \$240.8 million sectors)

Background on Northeast Sectors

Amendment 13 (2003): Cape Cod Commercial Hookfishermen's Assoc. receives permission from NEFMC to create a "sector" for Atlantic cod hook and line fishing (hard TAC, group alloc.)

Framework 42 (2005): CCCHA requests second cod sector for gillnets

Amendment 16 (2010): NEFMC approves 17 new sectors for groundfish – not just cod (ACLs, group alloc. based on indiv. potential quotas) - 98% of allocation in sectors

Can choose to remain with previous Days-at-Sea program – now called Common Pool by NMFS and referred to as the cesspool by some in the fishing industry

Focus of this Research

- Southern New England
 - Rhode Island
 - Massachusetts
- 6 Sectors: NEFS 2,5,7,10; Sustainable Harvest; Fixed Gear -- especially sectors 5 and 10
- Common Pool
- Fishing families and local fishing businesses



Methods and Analysis

- Outline of topics
- Digital recording
- Transcription
- Coding and recoding
- Meta-themes and sub-themes
- Replicability of coding/inter-rater reliability
- Network Views
- Comparison with other sources (e.g., literature, surveys)

Relationship to Catch Shares Literature

- Consolidation will occur – even sometimes when design features try to limit it
- Economic impacts may not be evenly distributed – those often harder hit include:
 - Crew members
 - Small owner-operated vessels
 - Communities where small owner-operated vessels are more common
- Cultural values may be negatively impacted even if economic impacts are not severe
- Who decides on catch shares and how (governance issues) are key to their acceptance

Some Numbers

- 40 oral histories
- Comparing life before/after sectors
 - 5 doing well/better since sectors
 - 7 neutral/about the same
 - 28 worse/much worse off
- Interview categories: sectors/other (some overlap)
 - 22 in sectors
 - 9 family members
 - 7 common pool
 - 4 other (RI Coastal Resources Management Council member previously a fisherman; At-Sea Monitor; gear shop owner; works for wholesale seafood company after leaving fishing)

Results: Some Key Themes

- The creation of sectors
- Impacts of sectors
 - consolidation and diversity
 - safety at sea
 - outlook on life
 - finances and retirement
 - the next generation
 - communities
- Making it work



Governance: Creation of Sectors

“...they probably should have taken into account some vessel size stuff, maybe used some of that in their equations... A lot of groundfishing has been down over the last decade or so, so guys went and did other things... You penalize those guys for... trying to work on species that were in good shape, and you reward the guys that were just continuing to pound on the groundfish stocks.” **Common Pool and Sector 7**

Fisherman, Charles Borden



“Basically they said that the Days at Sea we had were like Confederate money - no longer valid. I personally spent \$350,000 to buy additional permits so that I could continue to fish under the Days at Sea system. Those permits have little or no value when Amendment 16 came into play...” *Common Pool and Sector 2*
Fisherman, Carl Buchard

Impacts of Sectors: Consolidation

“...the situation is fleet diversity you know, the Bigger guys are the ones that are making out and the little guys are getting screwed... Can the big boats come in to where the inshore boats go? Should there be a size limit to the guys that, you know the boats that can come in and wipe them? ... There has to be something.” ***Judy Keding, wife of Jim Keding (a Sector 10 Fisherman)***



“That’s my biggest concern with the sectors stuff is I don’t see any stop to the consolidation of it. I just see it turning into four companies on the east coast that own the entire fishing industry.” ***Common Pool and Sector 7 Fisherman, Charles Borden***

Impacts of Sectors: Safety

“...under Days at Sea we were all fishing together, ... three or four of us fishing with each other in the same area so we were at least able to keep an eye on each other ..., but that certainly has changed under sectors. ...most of the time I am the only boat within miles and it really, really has made it a lot less safe.” *Sector 10 Fisherman, Ed Barrett*

“... a lot of us are so far behind now in maintaining our equipment where we are not going to last another year or two under the current regime of catch shares. Our boats are going to need some more maintenance than we are able to afford.” *Sector 10 Fisherman, Tim Barrett*



Impacts of Sectors: Outlook on Life

“You cannot have a good outlook when you have no money, and if you have no money you are not going to be part of society. It has gone downhill physically and emotionally. ... I have a stress level that I have never seen in my entire life. It does affect my marriage, it does affect my life.” *Sector 10 Fisherman, Tim Barrett*



“I will say that this was a wonderful business to be in my whole life. But I’ve never been so discouraged as I am now.” *Sector 5 Fisherman, Rodman Sykes*

“[The government] has put us in positions that we’re constantly nervous, constantly upset, constantly worried about our financials.”
Sector 10 Fisherman, Tim Caldwell

Impacts of Sectors: Finances - 1

“I used to have my own vessel. Now I am a captain on a vessel. I had to sell my vessel because of the sectors that came in.” **Sector 10 Fisherman, Jim Keding**

“[Sectors are] good for very few people and those few people are the ones that have many licenses, and a lot of quota and have access to money so they can buy more fish.” *Sector 10 Fisherman, Ron Borjeson*

“...it’s a good thing my wife works ’cause you need that double income...now she gets benefits through her job, which is great ... because ... my income had dropped so much that we couldn’t afford the health insurance.” *Sector 5 Fisherman, Niles Pearsall*



Impacts of Sectors: Finances - 2

“You own [fish]...and you can do what you want with it. You can sell them all to somebody else, never go fishing. You can catch yours, plus a whole bunch of somebody else’s... Oh, the flexibility is phenomenal.” *Sustainable Harvest Sector Fisherman, Phil Rhule Jr.*

“[Sector fisherman] have a way more flexible way to fish. They’re exempt from a lot of the Days at Sea regulations, and they can almost plan their life if somebody has a decent allocation...” **Common Pool Fisherman, Rob Walz**



Impact of Sectors: Retirement

“...you thought... by the time I’m 60 years old I’ll sell [my boat] and the whole thing will be worth a million or a million and a half dollars and I’ll just put away, pay Uncle Sam and I’ll live on that and other investments I have and be fine. Well, hell, you are not gonna’ get a million, million and half dollars for any boats anymore.” **Sector 5**

Fisherman, Fred Mattera



“I mean, last year I cashed out all of my retirement accounts ... to pay my mortgage.” **Sector 10 Fisherman, Kevin Norton**

“If you want to call a monthly budget a future plan, then that’s what I have now. Before I was saving money. I’ve spent all of my money. I don’t have any retirement money, I don’t have any savings.” **Sector 10 Fisherman, Steve Welsh**

Impact of Sectors: Next Generation



“There’s no young kids coming in. There’s no way, even my own sons can’t afford to buy me out, and I can’t afford to just give it away because that’s my retirement...”

Sector 7/8 Fisherman, Bill McCann

“...the saddest part of this entire change over that the fisheries has had, that it has now eliminated the opportunities for any young people to really get into this business without having a million dollar backer behind you.” *Common Pool Fisherman, Hillary Dombrowski*

Impacts of Sectors: Communities

“ [Gloucester] has shrunk to almost nothing... Sectors have] exacerbated the problem. It was shrinking as the fishing got, you know, as this fishing deteriorated back in the ‘80s and the early ‘90s, you know the infrastructure started to go away because there wasn’t enough fish.” *Common Pool Fisherman, Hillary Dombrowski*



“It’s torn the port apart. It really has. I mean, socially, people just ‘... I hate him, I hate him, he’s this, he’s that....’ It wasn’t like that before [sectors], you know?” *Sector 13 Fisherman, John Curzake*

Making it Work

“...having a lot of options I think is key. If you have, you know, you can lobster, monkfish, groundfish, you know, scup, sea bass, fluke fishing, dogfishing, skate fishing, you got all these thing going on where all you really have to do is just stay busy.” *Common Pool and Sector 7, Charles Borden*

“There’s a lot of quota that is available, and we can be profitable leasing quota. Last year I leased and caught five times my allocation. ... Not for enormous profit, because we paid pretty much to fish, but we got by.” *Sector 5 Fisherman, Chris Brown*

“I’m investing in real estate in town. I just bought a home. And also a piece of property I’m building two houses on for rentals... [Fishing] might not last forever. And physically, I certainly can’t last forever...” **Common Pool Fisherman, Ian Parente**



Application to SIA

- Triangulation with fishery performance measures, community vulnerability indices, community profiles and taxonomy of fishing communities
- Not just confirmation of other findings but depth and contextualization of findings
- Ideas for future research
- Particularly useful in interpreting and communicating the results of a larger study to the fishing community – it's in their language
- Acceptance of qualitative studies in actual SIAs in the Northeast is the next step