SPINY DOGFISH - Commercial Permit Process

What is being considered?
The Department would like to simplify the permitting process for commercial spiny dogfish to make it similar to other coastal permitted species (e.g., black sea bass, summer flounder).

The Department would like to simplify the permitting process and state that:

1. No more than 28 permits will be issued; and
2. A permit can be issued to a commercial licensee that owns or has share of ownership in a federally permitted vessel; and
    a. Held a permit in the previous license season; or
    b. Was permanently transferred a permit.

The Department will establish a waitlist for individuals that would like a permit. Individuals on the waitlist will be issued permits after existing permit holders do not renew them.

Why is this change necessary?
As the commercial spiny dogfish fishery is now well established compared to when the permitting criteria was first put in place, it makes sense to simplify the process to make it similar to the other fisheries on the coast (e.g., summer flounder and black sea bass).

In 2013, the Department opened an application process to obtain a commercial spiny dogfish permit. At that time, the fishery was newly expanding and criteria to obtain a permit was established at the request of the commercial industry.

Currently, the criteria for obtaining a permit is:

- The individual provides proof that they owned or had a share of ownership in a vessel that landed at least 1,000 pounds of spiny dogfish between May 1, 2004, and March 8, 2013, and have not previously held a Maryland spiny dogfish landing permit;
- The individual holds a spiny dogfish landing permit that is valid for the current season and owns a vessel that landed a minimum of 15,000 pounds of spiny dogfish within 3 seasons of obtaining that permit; or
- The individual has received a spiny dogfish landing permit through a permanent transfer within the past 3 seasons.

and

- An individual shall own or have a share of ownership in a vessel to be eligible to declare for a spiny dogfish landing permit.
- If there is more than one owner of a vessel, a licensee may declare the vessel on the spiny dogfish landing permit if the licensee:
    - Owns at least 51 percent of the vessel; or
    - Has permission from the other owners who, whether individually or in combination, own at least 51 percent of the vessel.

Simplifying the process at this time makes sense because currently the same number of permits (21 to 28) are being issued annually to the same individuals.

Who will this affect?
This change applies to commercial licensees who have or would like to get a spiny dogfish permit.

Has this change been discussed with advisory bodies or other interested or impacted individuals?

1. This was discussed at two previous meetings with the coastal commercial fishing industry:
    a. A permitting process summary meeting in January 2026; and
    b. The Coastal Fisheries Forum in May 2026.
2. This idea was discussed with the Sport Fisheries Advisory Commission and the Tidal Fisheries Advisory Commission at their meeting in October 2026.

Regulatory Process
Fishing rules in Maryland may be created by either the General Assembly or the Department. When the Department creates a fishing rule, it is called a regulation. When the General Assembly creates a rule, it is called a statute. The Department often has to create a regulation to implement a statute. The regulatory process begins with scoping and the Department follows normal procedures as concepts move forward.

During the scoping process, the Department gathers suggestions and ideas from stakeholders and others about how to solve a fishery problem or address a need. The goal of scoping is to identify issues, potential impacts, and reasonable alternatives associated with the issues so that management actions can be developed. After the public has had an opportunity to comment on possible management actions during the scoping process, the Department considers these comments and develops an appropriate management strategy.

When could this be effective?
The Department projects that this change could be effective in July 2027 prior to the next license renewal time period. However, the exact date cannot be determined at this time.