

Sustaining Farming on the Urban Fringe



Monthly Highlights from Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

December 2009

NJ Fishermen—like Farmers—Sustainably Harvest

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Sustainability applies to both business enterprises and harvested resources

New Jersey has 127 miles of Atlantic coastline and many additional miles of Barnegat and Delaware bayshore. Recreational and commercial fish revenues are worth about \$2 billion annually, and help support a \$16 billion tourism enterprise. In early November we visited Viking Village Dock as an example linking family fishing enterprises, sustainable resources and Rutgers programming.

Like farmers, fishermen need to manage their harvests to best sustain their business, resources and to fulfill a market demand. As an example, the Spiny dogfish harvest season is a good fit locally between more lucrative New Jersey finfish or scallop seasons. A sustainably managed local Spiny dogfish harvest keeps boats working, keeps the deckhands earning pay, provides jobs for dockworkers, truckers, and new export revenue for our industry and our economy. New Jersey fishermen are limited to a 3,000 lb. daily Spiny dogfish catch by regulation from Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC). During our dockside visit, fishermen were receiving about \$0.18 per lb. \$540 may seem barely sufficient to cover deckhands' wages, fuel, insurance, maintenance, and other expenses. Yet, in return for a 7 A.M to noon morning's work, it is added cash for our local fishermen.

In the U.S., consumers don't commonly use Spiny dogfish for fish and chips, preferring finfish like cod, haddock, or halibut. While broadly distributed for fish and chips processing worldwide, popular Spiny dogfish were over-fished off Europe and population stocks declined. The ASMFC works toward healthy, self-sustaining populations of Atlantic coast fish species. The



Spiny dogfish (mud shark) unloaded at Viking Village dock, Barnegat Light, NJ by a steady line of independent commercial dayboats.

ASMFC's 2008 Northeast Fisheries Science Center assessment update indicates Spiny dogfish are no longer over-fished in our region from Maine to North Carolina, and can support current harvests. Additionally, Spiny dogfish are considered an undesirable, bottom feeding, predator species in our region. They sometimes damage populations of more desirable lucrative fishery species.

Viking Village Dock, Barnegat Light, NJ

Viking Village dock is family-owned and operated, providing highest quality graded and handled seafood for wholesale consolidation and distribution. It believes in being a fair broker for local fishermen. Viking Village managers believe in, support, and adhere to fisheries management practices for sustainable harvests. Three members have participated in the New Jersey Agricultural Leadership Development Program. After all, fishermen are farmers, too!

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Spiny dogfish are quickly weighed-in, immediately iced, then shipped to New Bedford, MA for processing, before leaving for their primary market: export sale to Europe for fish and chips.



One of Flimlin's most dynamic, collaborative Extension public education projects, in which community volunteers are key partners, has been the Re-Clam The Bay component of the Barnegat Bay Shellfish Restoration Program focused on educating individual, household, and community behaviors affecting the sustainability of Barnegat Bay and its resources. Visit <http://www.reclamthebay.org>.



In cooperation with Rutgers Cooperative Extension's Gef Flimlin, Viking Village supports public education, about commercial and recreational fisheries, shelf fish, and water quality resources management in neighboring communities. Viking Village maintains a wall art portrayal of local fisheries, which Flimlin uses in educating the public

Viking Village certainly maintains strong sales to distributors who reach quality-minded local chefs and retail stores and they encourage some direct sales. However, an impeccable reputation for quality and freshness is more keenly valued than local markets alone. In a competitive East Coast market, being a local food supplier to a captive market is not an excuse for providing mediocre or even everyday quality. Only top quality offerings and handling sustain the Viking Village dock, the business, brokering, and the family fishermen who land their catch. A Viking Village goal is spreading its products and quality reputation "as far away from the East Coast as possible, where prices are better." Viking Village makes strenuous efforts educating distributors and hospitality chefs to order smaller lots, more frequently, so only the freshest seafood is in their dishes.