Fishing vessel affiliations: where does one end and another begin?

Barbara Rountree*, Andrew Kitts**, Peter Christman

* DOC/NMFS/NEFSC
** NOAA/NMFS/NEFSC/SSB

Abstract

Identifying fishing vessel affiliations, which are groups of vessels connected by common owners or other factors such as ties to another business or contractual relationships, is important for two reasons. The first reason is that it allows for assessments of potential market power and/or equity considerations in catch share fisheries. The second reason is that it aids in the identification of large versus small businesses, which is crucial for assessing differential impacts of proposed fisheries regulations on large and small entities as required by US law under the Regulatory Flexibility Act. Until recently, it was not possible to properly ascertain vessel affiliations since vessel ownership information was limited. Beginning in 2010, completion of a vessel ownership form (listing all persons and entities with an ownership interest) is required to apply for a Northeast U.S. federal fishing permit. Collecting data on vessel ownership was the first step in understanding the intricate web of ways that vessels could be affiliated. This paper discusses the results so far and poses a number of questions and options for developing a tractable definition of a vessel affiliation.