

Seafood Inspection Program of the U.S. Department of Commerce

The U.S. Department of Commerce (USDC), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) offers a voluntary inspection service to seafood producers and processors (under the authority of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946). The Voluntary Seafood Inspection Program offers a variety of professional inspection services that assure compliance with all applicable food regulations.

USDC Seafood Inspection Program services are provided for a fee. As of October 1, 1999, the basic hourly fee for a full-time in-house plant inspector was \$49.30. Services provided by the USDC seafood inspectors are designed to meet the needs of the individual producers. Generally, the inspector serves as:

Sanitation advisor: oversees corrections of sanitary practices at the facility

Quality control monitor: observes production to assure a wholesome end product

Official certifier: sample and evaluates

final product for U.S. Grade A certification

Products inspected and certified under the USDC Seafood Inspection Program that meet all of the requirements and criteria specified have the U.S. Grade A seal of approval.



The U.S. Grade A mark signifies that a product meets the highest level of quality established in the applicable U.S. grade standard and has been processed under the USDC Voluntary Seafood Inspection Program in a sanitarily approved facility.

A Proposed Mandatory Inspection Program

Only a small number of seafood producers participate in the voluntary seafood inspection program. The main reason is that some businesses think the voluntary seafood inspection program will result in higher prices. It has been proposed that the voluntary seafood inspection program become mandatory.

Seafood producers would be required to pay the fee for a USDC seafood inspector. With the Mandatory Seafood Inspection Program you could be sure that all the seafood you ate had the Grade A seal of approval.

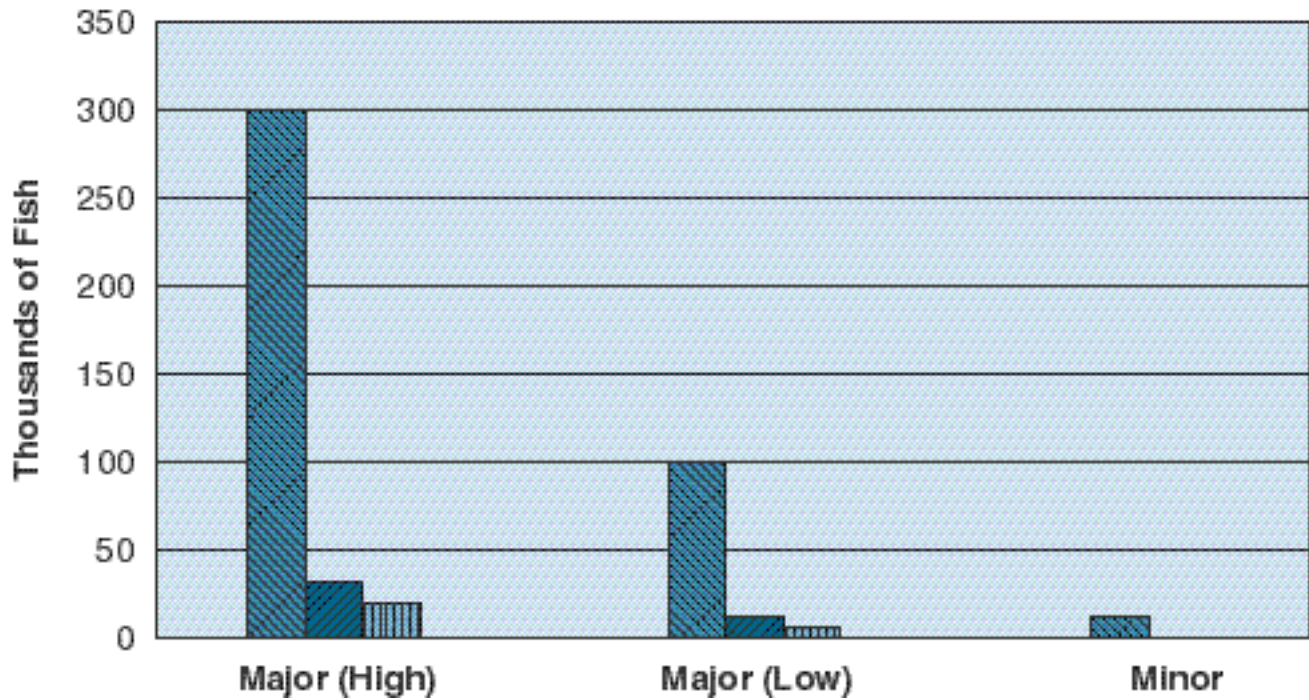
Pfiesteria Associated Fish Kills in the Mid-Atlantic Region

The following describes what some people consider to be typical *Pfiesteria* associated fish kills in the Mid-Atlantic Region:

Major *Pfiesteria* associated fish kills typically involve hundreds of thousands of fish over large areas of river surface. Most of the fish in these kills are menhaden. However edible species such as croaker and flounder may also be found. Lesions appear on more than 50% of the menhaden.

Minor *Pfiesteria* associated fish kills typically involve less than ten thousand fish over small areas of river surface. All of the fish in these kills tend to be menhaden. Lesions appear on more than 50% of the menhaden.

For example, this chart illustrates typical major and minor fish kills:



Menhaden



Croaker



Flounder

