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NOAA AWARDS \$120,625 TO OCEAN TRUST
Funding To Support Seafood Industry Conservation Partnerships

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced a \$120,625 grant to Ocean Trust as part of a multi-project partnership to restore habitat vital to the conservation of the nation's coastal fisheries. NOAA is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The funding will support projects to improve commercial and recreational fisheries by providing nursery areas and food sources for target species. The goal is to involve seafood industry partners in on-the-ground habitat restoration projects that restore marine, estuarine and riparian habitats. These habitats may include salt marshes, seagrass beds, oyster reefs, coral reefs, mangrove forests, shellfish beds and freshwater spawning and rearing habitats in streams and rivers. The award kicks off a second three-year restoration effort, started in 2001, between the NOAA Community-based Restoration Program, Ocean Trust and the National Fisheries Institute.

"This partnership between NOAA, Ocean Trust and the National Fisheries Institute will fund valuable projects and initiatives that help make certain our fisheries resources rebound and stay healthy," said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "NOAA and the Bush Administration's goal to ensure healthy coastal habitats and vibrant coastal communities can only be accomplished when there is strong local stewardship of the habitats that support our fisheries resources."

Ocean Trust announced the 2004 project solicitation period on June 1, 2004.

"We'd like to invite seafood companies, restaurants, retailers and the public to join in this partnership to restore habitat and local fisheries," said Thor Lassen, president of Ocean Trust. "This is a tremendous opportunity to build a strong coalition of public participants to enhance fishery dependent ecosystems."

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“The commercial fish and seafood industry is committed to the restoration and conservation of important fish habitat,” said John Connelly, NFI president. “Restoring these areas means a healthier coastal environment and improved fisheries for fishermen and consumers who love seafood.”

Ocean Trust works to bring science, conservation and food perspectives together for the sustainability of the oceans, while NFI is the nation’s leading trade association representing all aspects of the seafood industry. Past projects funded through the OT, NFI, NOAA partnership have been as varied as removing ghost nets in Oregon waters, to restoring oyster beds in New England.

Partnership funding is available on a one-to-one matching basis for regional restoration projects. Deadlines for submitting project proposals to Ocean Trust will be June 30 and October 31 for the next 3 years, based on availability of funds. Partnerships between seafood companies and restoration groups are encouraged. The application process is posted at <http://www.oceantrust.org>.

The NOAA Restoration Center uses a community-based restoration program to work with organizations and governments to support locally driven habitat restoration projects in marine, estuarine and riparian areas. NOAA funds on-the-ground habitat restoration projects that offer educational and social benefits for citizens and their communities and provide long-term ecological benefits for fishery resources. Since 1996, over 800 projects in 26 states have been implemented using NOAA funding and leveraged funding from national and regional habitat restoration partners. For more information on the Community-based Restoration Program, please visit: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration>.

Each year, NOAA awards approximately \$900 million in grants to members of the academic, scientific and business communities to assist the agency in fulfilling its mission to study the Earth’s natural systems in order to predict environmental change, manage ocean resources, protect life and property, and provide decision makers with reliable scientific information. NOAA goals and programs reflect a commitment to these basic responsibilities of science and service to the nation for the past 33 years.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation’s coastal and marine resources. To learn more about NOAA, please visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.