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**Commerce Secretary Determines Red Tide Disaster  
in Massachusetts, Maine, and New Hampshire**

U.S. Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez today determined that the economic effects of closing some shellfish fisheries due to a harmful algal bloom, commonly referred to as a red tide, in ocean waters off Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine has caused a commercial fishery failure.

“This natural disaster, which forced the closing of shellfish beds to protect human health, has hurt commercial shellfishermen from Massachusetts to Maine,” Gutierrez said. “We recognize that this disaster is widespread and we have determined a commercial fishery failure in the waters off all three states.”

Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick requested the Secretary determine a commercial fishery failure due to red tide on Sept. 4. Shellfish closures due to the single cell algae that carries toxins began in the waters off Massachusetts in May, and spread north into the waters off New Hampshire and Maine. Fishermen have been unable to harvest clams, mussels, oysters and other shellfish in areas closed after tests showed the presence of red tide. Although some closures have been lifted, many areas remain closed.

When a similar outbreak occurred in 2005, the Department of Commerce also determined a commercial fishery failure.

“Working with the states, NOAA’s Fisheries Service will continue efforts to assess damage to the shellfishing industry and seek ways to lessen the economic effects of harmful algal blooms on the industry,” said Jim Balsiger, acting NOAA assistant administrator for NOAA’s Fisheries Service.

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