



Contact: Scott Smullen / Chris Vaccaro  
202-482-6090

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### **NOAA Commits \$16 Million to Assist the Northeast Fishing Industry To Ease Transition to New Management of Groundfish**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced today it will allocate \$16 million of its current fiscal year 2009 budget to assist the Northeast fishing industry with the transition to management of the fishery by sectors and catch shares. On Monday, NOAA announced the interim rules to reduce overfishing and rebuild Northeast Groundfish stocks.

“We worked hard to find ways to provide quick and meaningful help to the fishing industry through increased cooperative research and assistance in setting up the infrastructure for the new management system based on sectors and catch shares,” Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco said. “NOAA is committed to working with fishing communities to find long-term solutions that create sustainable and profitable fisheries.”

Of the \$16 million, \$6 million is allotted for cooperative research, enhancing existing research projects in which fishermen and scientists work together to improve surveys of fish stocks, as well as develop and test fishing gear that targets healthy stocks.

Ten million will be used to develop data reporting and fishery monitoring systems to better monitor fishing efforts, document catches, and track fishing permit transfers – all measures that will allow near real-time and transparent management of the fishery.

“The resources announced today will help the region transition to a better future, a future characterized by healthy fisheries and healthy oceans,” Northeast Regional Administrator for NOAA’s Fisheries Service Patricia Kurkul said.

In addition, the Economic Development Administration (EDA), another agency within the Commerce Department, administers other grant and assistance programs that are available to the communities and workers impacted by the economic downturn. NOAA will work with EDA to disseminate information about these programs to the impacted communities. EDA provides planning, technical assistance and implementation grants to distressed communities.

Lubchenco unveiled the \$16 million package today as she addressed the New England Fishery Management Council at their April meeting in Mystic, Connecticut.

The New England Fishery Management Council and NOAA are working together to develop new groundfish management measures that will include an expanded number of fishing sectors— a group of vessel permit holders who voluntarily agree to fishing restrictions and procedures in exchange for a share of the total catch allocated to the industry.

This system based on catch shares will replace the current method of limiting fishing through days at sea for those vessels that join a sector. There are already two groundfish sectors operating in New England and 17 more proposed that could encompass the majority of groundfish boats in the Northeast.

NOAA’s long-term goals for the fishery include establishing fishing capacity at a level consistent with both conservation objectives and a profitable industry.

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