

NOAA Fisheries Service Northeast Region recently selected nine new proposals under the Cooperative Research Partners Program (CRPP) to conduct research projects in 2006. Funding for the projects totalled approximately \$1 million. A brief description of each project is provided below:

A Fisherman-led Fishing Gear Workshop for Non-fishermen, University of New Hampshire Federal Share: \$27,724

New Hampshire Sea Grant will conduct a 3-day fishing gear workshop for state, Federal and other professionals (but who are not fishermen) to foster understanding of commercial fishing gear issues. Fishing gear researchers and commercial fishermen will act as instructors to encourage cooperative partnerships and facilitate communication between fishermen and non-fishermen. The program will include at-sea and dockside components.

Develop Gear Modifications for the Herring Midwater Trawl Fishery to Minimize Haddock Bycatch, East Coast Pelagic Association Federal Share: \$150,552

The project will investigate modifications to herring midwater trawl gear at the St. Johns, Newfoundland, Canada flume tank. The effectiveness of the modified gear will be tested at-sea while gathering information on the extent of midwater trawl interactions with haddock through video monitoring.

Effects of the Western Gulf of Maine Closure on the Boulder and Deep Mud Habitats, Mass. Fishermen's Partnership Federal Share: \$85,000

The objectives of the project are to sample haddock, cusk, eelpout, and redfish on boulder reefs inside and outside of the Western GOM Closed area by means of fish pots; determine diet composition; and utilize stable isotopes to assess feeding habitats and effective trophic level. Researchers will expand the food web study into deep mud habitats, using trawl sampling. Additionally, the scientists will obtain one more time-point from a previously sampled habitat, gravel bottom, and make fuller use of food web (stable isotope and stomach) samples from shoal habitats that are already in hand from our earlier work

An Assessment of Escape Vent Selectivity, Bycatch and Discard Survivability in the Northeast Fishery for Deep Water Red Crab, Gulf of Maine Research Institute Federal Share: \$100,198

The objective of the project is to undertake a collaborative research study that will assess the discard survivability and escape vent efficiency in the deep water red crab fishery, off the New England continental shelf, in addition to quantifying bycatch composition of this fishery.

Design and Test of a Topless Shrimp Trawl to Reduce Finfish Bycatch in the Pink Shrimp Fishery, University of New Hampshire
Federal Share: \$131,237

The researchers design and test a topless shrimp trawl to allow escapement of all finfish and in combination with an inverted nordmore grid, attempt to eliminate all finfish and shellfish bycatch. A prototype will be tested in a flume tank, then a full-scale trawl will be fabricated and tested at sea during the 2006 shrimp fishery. The net will be monitored by an underwater video camera and evaluated based on the catch composition of commercial trawlers fishing standard shrimp nets.

A Social Study of the Gulf of Maine Lobster Industry, Gulf of Maine Research Institute
Federal Share: \$100,858

Socioeconomic information will be collected through a survey of lobstermen, dealers and associated industry professionals. A Stakeholder Steering Committee will assist in preparing the survey questions. The survey will be followed by a series of meetings throughout Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts to report and interpret resulting data with stakeholders.

Staying Alive: Promoting a Culture of Safety at Sea in the New England Fishing Industry, Mass. Fishermen's Partnership
Federal Share: \$124,440

Through this project, the researchers will train fishermen in safety, damage control, rescue procedures, and first aid to improve their knowledge and skills; increase interaction between the Coast Guard and fishermen to improve communication and collaboration; work closely with the New Bedford Safety Task Force and the Coast Guard to develop a long-term program that will provide on-going opportunities for and participation in safety training for fishermen; and explore potential for lowering the costs of safety equipment and/or insurance in part through active participation in safety training.

Evaluation of Hook Size and Shape in the Catch of Sublegal Cod and Haddock in the Recreational Fishery, ADM Associates
Federal Share: \$82,200

This pilot project has six goals/objectives:

- Provide information to management about the catch of sublegal cod and haddock with the gear typically used in the recreational (charter boat) fishery in the northeast region.
- Determine the relative catch of sublegal cod and haddock with standard and oversize hooks.
- Determine the relative catch of sublegal cod and haddock with "J" hooks versus circle hooks.

- Estimate the relative damage (possible mortality) to sublegal cod and haddock with standard versus oversize “J” hooks and circle hooks.
- Provide 600 educational contact days to recreational fishermen.
- Determine whether use of charter fishing vessels is an appropriate way to conduct cooperative research.

**Test Novel Gear Designs for Reducing Catch of Skates in Groundfish Fisheries,
Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences
Federal Share: \$129,695**

This project will:

- Conduct commercial sea trials in Gulf of Maine groundfish fisheries using a transversely oriented, rigid-mesh, netting panel in the belly and forward sections of a conventional trawl net.
- Film the device under water.
- Record and analyze behavior reactions of skate to the device.
- Assess the effect of the device in reducing bycatch and discard and quantify its effect on retention of target species.
- Assess the practicability of the device for Gulf of Maine groundfish fisheries and make recommendations with regard to its potential usefulness as a management tool for Gulf of Maine groundfish fisheries.
- Encourage active participation of fishermen and the fishing industry in providing solutions to pressing problems within Northeastern US fisheries.

For more information regarding the CRPP funded projects, contact Harry Mears at 978-281-9243 or email Harry.Mears@noaa.gov.