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**NOAA FISHERIES AWARDS \$900 THOUSAND FOR PROJECTS
THROUGH THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT**
Congress Allocates Funding to NOAA Fisheries for Conservation and Research

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) awarded more than \$900,000 to six Atlantic coast states and two territories to conserve and protect threatened and endangered marine species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). For the first time in the history of the ESA, Congress provided funding to NOAA Fisheries specifically for the implementation of a program, under section 6 of the Act, to foster state cooperation in national conservation efforts. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The funds, which will be matched in a 3:1 cost-share (state to federal funding) for positive water borne conservation and research efforts on ESA-listed marine species along the Atlantic coast and U.S. Caribbean Territories. Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Maryland and Massachusetts, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands will receive funding for work on shortnose and Atlantic sturgeon, smalltooth sawfish, and leatherback, loggerhead, Kemp's ridley and green sea turtles.

Projects range from gathering information on habitat use, understanding distribution of and tracking movements for sturgeon and sawfish to determining habitat preference, identifying interactions with gillnet fisheries and tracking of sea turtles. Education of the public about species conservation is a primary component of many projects.

Section 6 of the Act is a mechanism for the federal government to encourage states to further national goals of conserving and protecting marine species. Currently, seven states and two territories are eligible for Section 6 grants.

To submit a grant proposal, the states entered into a cooperative agreement with NOAA Fisheries that demonstrates a commitment to conservation, and an ability to implement and monitor such programs. The funding of these projects was conducted through a competitive proposal process. NOAA Fisheries plans to continue and expand the Section 6 program in the future, and welcomes agreements with any state interested in conserving their marine species.

This first year of funding for state grants serves as a reminder of the importance of local as well as national conservation efforts. The projects receiving funding this year will be completed by researchers familiar with conservation issues in their state. Locally-based, grassroots conservation efforts are an integral part of conserving threatened and endangered species under the ESA.

NOAA Fisheries is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources, and the habitat on which they depend, through scientific research, management and enforcement. Our stewardship of these resources benefits the nation by supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, while helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

The Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (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.

On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA Fisheries: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>