



Contact: Monica Allen, Public Affairs
301-713-2370

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NOAA Finds No Fishery Disaster in Northeast for Groundfishermen

Citing increased fish stocks and some increases in fishing revenue, NOAA has determined that a commercial fishery failure under federal law has not occurred in the groundfishery in Massachusetts, Maine and Rhode Island. The determination was made after the states' governors requested an examination of whether a commercial fishery failure exists.

"We understand New England groundfishermen have experienced some economic difficulty, but there is reason to believe we are turning a corner," said William T. Hogarth, director of NOAA Fisheries Service. "Our latest research shows encouraging increases in most of the groundfish stocks. There is not a commercial fishery failure and we're committed to doing everything we can to ensure one does not happen in the future."

Fishing regulations required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act have contributed to the increases in groundfish stocks. Fourteen of 18 groundfish stocks show increases in the amount of adult groundfish able to reproduce in the most recent stock assessment. Total cod is up 36 percent. Georges Bank haddock is up more than 500 percent and Georges Bank yellowtail flounder is up 209 percent in a decade.

While groundfish revenue decreased between 15 and 25 percent in Massachusetts and Maine from 2005 to 2006, the decline was not at the level of a commercial fishery failure. Groundfish revenue in Rhode Island ports increased by 73 percent in the same period.

Total revenue from all fish species entering Massachusetts ports rose by \$10 million in that period, bringing the state's landings revenue in 2006 to \$437.5 million. Fishing ports in the three states are among the top 20 ports for fish landings in the nation, with New Bedford, Mass., and Gloucester, Mass., ranked number 1 and number 11 nationally in the dollar value of fish landings.

"We still have a way to go to return the groundfishing industry to where it belongs, but we are encouraged by the progress New England has made to rebuild groundfish that were near collapse a decade ago," said Hogarth. "Healthy groundfish stocks are essential to the economic and nutritional future of New England and our nation."

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is celebrating 200 years of science and service to the nation. From the establishment of the Survey of the Coast in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson to the formation of the Weather Bureau and the Commission of Fish and Fisheries in the 1870s, much of America's scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and

marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 70 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public. To learn more about NOAA Fisheries Service, please visit: www.nmfs.noaa.gov.

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