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NOAA Honors Florida Sea Grant Agent for Empowering Fishermen

NOAA's Fisheries Service will give Douglas Gregory, the Florida Sea Grant extension agent in Key West, a national award for his work to improve the public's understanding of commercial fishing and for helping fishermen see the importance of sustainable fishing.

NOAA's leaders will present Gregory with the Public Education, Community Service and Media Award at the third annual Sustainable Fisheries Leadership Awards ceremony in Washington, D.C., on June 2.

"The health and sustainability of the planet's ocean resources is of paramount importance for the world's environmental, economic and human wellbeing," said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "The contributions of our honorees inspire others and enhance NOAA's work to conserve and manage our nation's marine resources."

"Growing up in a fishing family, Doug Gregory has the sensitivity to understand fishermen and their work ethic," said Jim Balsiger, acting assistant administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. "He uses this sensitivity to help fishermen see the importance of sustaining fisheries for future generations."

When he first began working at Sea Grant in 1991, fishermen told Gregory they had little advance warning about important meetings where regulations affecting their fishing were established. He began writing columns for local newspapers to keep fishermen and the general public better informed. His media efforts over the years have paid off. Today, he says the media are more interested in writing about commercial fishing and realize how important it is to the region. And he has helped empower commercial fishermen to take an active role with state and federal regulators in ensuring fisheries remain sustainable for future generations.

Gregory has also helped the leaders of the Florida Keys fishing industry understand the importance of limited access management approaches, or quota systems, to sustaining fisheries. His cooperative research documenting the rapid increase of spiny lobster in an ecological reserve within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary also showed the importance of reserves to sustainable fishery management.

For the full list of Sustainable Fisheries Leadership award winners go to: www.noaa.gov

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, 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.

On the Web:
NOAA's Fisheries Service: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>