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NOAA to Honor National Leaders in Sustainable Fisheries

NOAA's Fisheries Service announced today that it will honor seven people and two organizations for their efforts to enhance the understanding, protection, and sustainable use of U.S. ocean resources. This recognition is part of the agency's third annual Sustainable Fisheries Leadership Awards program.

NOAA's leaders will present the awards at a 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."

"We received many outstanding nominations again this year, and the selection process was difficult," said Jim Balsiger, acting assistant administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. "We thank each of the 70 nominees for their role in helping us preserve our fishing heritage while conserving marine wildlife and ocean habitats."

This year's recipients in the six categories of achievement are:

- Robert C. Fletcher, president of the Sportfishing Association of California, will receive the *Special Recognition Award* for his dedication to the management, conservation and sustainable use of West Coast marine fisheries. Fletcher is a leader in building consensus for sustainable fishing among competing stakeholders. (San Diego, Calif.)
- Patrick F. Riley, Capt. Manuel Calderón, and Capt. Louis Stephenson will receive the *Stewardship and Sustainability Award* for their leadership in the development and assessment of effective, efficient equipment to reduce the incidental catch and mortality of sea turtles and sharply reduce fuel use in the Gulf and South Atlantic shrimp industry. (Freeport, Angleton, and Hitchcock, Texas)
- The Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle Population Restoration Program, based at the Gladys Porter Zoo in Brownsville, Texas will receive the *Conservation Partnership Award*. A total of 26 partners representing federal, state and local governments, nongovernmental organizations, scientists, businesses and volunteers from the United States and Mexico have worked together for 30 years to protect and recover Kemp's Ridley sea turtles in the Gulf of Mexico. When the project began in 1978, an estimated 924 turtle nests were identified and protected that year. In 2007, more than 15,000 nests were protected, and more than one million baby turtles were released into the Gulf of Mexico. (Brownsville, Texas)
- Clayward Tam, of the Hawaii Division of Aquatic Resources, will receive the *Science, Research and Technology Award* for his efforts to involve the fishing community in cooperative research on jacks, Hawaii's most highly prized sport and food fish. This

research has given fishery scientists and managers the critical information on the fish's life history that is being used in ecosystem management.

(Honolulu, Hawaii)

- The Marine Conservation Alliance Foundation, based in Juneau, Alaska, will receive the *Coastal Habitat Restoration Award* for its efforts working with local residents to remove old nets, plastics and other debris from the fur seal rookeries on the Pribilof Islands and throughout coastal Alaska. The foundation has successfully involved a wide array of groups, including tribes, recreational groups and the commercial fishing industry, to remove hundreds of tons of debris from a state with more shoreline than the rest of the nation.
(Juneau, Alaska)
- Douglas Gregory, Florida Sea Grant Extension agent in Key West, Fla., will receive the *Public Education, Community Service, and Media Award* for his work in the Florida Keys to improve the public's understanding of commercial fishing, and for helping fishermen see the importance of sustainable fishing. He grew up working on his father's shrimp fishing boat and brings a deep sensitivity for fishing families and their work ethic to his work. He has helped empower commercial fishermen to take an active role with state and federal regulators in ensuring valuable fisheries remain sustainable for future generations.
(Key West, Fla.)
- NOAA's Fisheries Service is also recognizing Ralph Rayburn, who will be honored posthumously for his lifetime contributions to ensure conscientious management of marine resources in the Gulf of Mexico. Rayburn, who died this past January, was a visionary who worked cooperatively with shrimp fishermen and conservationists to help solve the problem of unintended sea turtle catches in the shrimp fishery. In his long, distinguished, and diverse career, he represented the shrimp industry as executive director of the Texas Shrimp Association, worked for state and federal resource management agencies—the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council—and helped direct university research as associate director of the Texas Sea Grant College program at Texas A&M University.
(College Station, Texas)

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.