

## Red Tide Event Harmful Algal Bloom in New England

In 2005, New England experienced the worst harmful algal bloom (HAB) event in 30 years. The "red tide" organism (a single-celled organism known as *Alexandrium fundyense*) produces a poison that is strong enough to kill people when consumed in enough quantity. Clams and mussels filter the water that the algae inhabits and concentrate the poison. The red tide organisms were so dense during the summer of 2005 and the shellfish so toxic that in some

cases eating even a single mussel could have been fatal. Quick action on the part of State and Federal regulators kept seafood from New England safe. There were no reported cases of paralytic shellfish poison (PSP) as a result of this HAB.

The extent of the HAB was remarkable. Starting in Maine, where PSP is a regular threat in spring and early summer, the HAB moved into New Hampshire and then Massachusetts waters, moving around Cape Cod and into some areas where the organism has never been reported before.

The State of Maine has reported that 2005 was the worst year for PSP in recent memory. Toxicity started two weeks earlier than normal and there were record high levels of toxicity at some locations. The HAB was unpredictable in its course of events, such that some areas were closed, then reopened for short periods, then closed again. In other areas, shellfish *(continued on page 4)* 



Mid-Atlantic Commercial Trap/Pot Fishermen Gear Buyback and Recycling Program



NOAA Fisheries Service, in collaboration with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), administered a Mid-Atlantic Gear Buyback and Recycling Program for state and/or Federally licensed or permitted commercial trap/pot fishermen in the Mid-Atlantic region (New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina). This exchange program was an effort to remove actively fished floating groundlines (lines between traps/pots) from the water, as these lines have been identified by the Atlantic

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Large Whale Take Reduction Team (ALWTRT) as an entanglement threat to large whales. Through the exchange program, participants were required to replace the floating line with line that sinks to the ocean bottom. This program was designed to give fishermen a head start for converting their gear from floating to sinking line, which may soon be required.

Line collection took place in mid-January 2006 at four locations: Point Pleasant, New Jersey; Sea Isle City,

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## Brief History of the Port of Gloucester America's Oldest Seaport

In 1623, a few shiploads of English fishermen set up a fishing stage along Gloucester's waterfront. This was the first settlement of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. After a couple of difficult winters, some of the fishermen moved down the coast a bit and founded Salem. Several years later



Gloucester reestablished its cod fishery. Fish houses, wharves, and drying racks were built inside the safety of Gloucester's southern exposed, deep, sheltered harbor. Other fishing outposts sprang up in Annisquam, Folly Cove, and along Sandy Bay in Rockport. For several generations, Gloucester rivaled Marblehead as America's number one fishing port.

Because of the Embargo of the War of 1812 and a shifting gale on the Grand Banks on September 19, 1846, that took eleven schooners and sixty-five men and boys, Marblehead suffered and never regained her prominence. From this point on, Gloucester was regarded as one the premier fishing ports in New England and in the World.

The development of a salt-fish trade with Spain and the West Indies in the 1700s added to Gloucester's fisheries and helped establish the port as a major fishing center in the Northwest Atlantic.

The 1800s saw the rise and fall of the halibut fishery, which became the first victim of overfishing and has never flourished again. Also during this period, American fishermen employed the French system of trawlline fishing. This new system replaced single hook fishing from one large vessel with multi-hook fishing conducted from dories. This method resulted in increased dangers to the fishermen and the loss of many lives. Many a dory has lost sight of the mother vessel during sudden squalls and snow storms and was never seen again.

In the mid 1800s, fishing for mackerel with hooks was replaced by

Gloucester was regarded as one of the premier fishing ports in New England and the World

purse seines. At the time, many thought this method would result in the end of the mackerel fishery because it took thousands of fish in one set.

Gillnetting was introduced in the late 1870s. The nets were set and hauled by hand from a dory. This fishing was not very popular until

> around 1908, when five or six small gillnetters, fully equipped, arrived in Gloucester from Michigan. The methods of the lake fishermen utilizing a mechanical lifter, which enabled setting and



hauling the nets directly from the vessel - proved successful.

The modern fishing vessels that we see today, called otter trawlers, were first used in New England in 1905. Coal and steam driven engines supplemented the power of the wind and the advent of the combustion engine completed the metamorphose. With this new-found power came the most important change of all - the way men fished - from using hooks to using mobile nets. Today, diesel engines afford vessels the power to tow large nets along the ocean bottom.

Although that was the beginning of modern fishing, many also believe it was the beginning of overfishing. The start of the twentieth century saw the decline of the salt fish trade with the development of quick freezing by Gloucester's Clarence Birdseye. The depression years of the early thirties was a difficult period for Gloucester. However, the situation changed for the better when redfish, formerly discarded as "trash fish", was "discovered" for its filleting qualities and similar taste of fresh water perch. This paved the way for the "golden era of fishing" in the port of Gloucester.

Much has happened since the glorious days of sail. In 1837, Gloucester fitted out 221 codfishing vessels and in 1851 claimed 241 schooners in the mackerel fishery (a total of close to 500 vessels). Today, Gloucester hosts about two hundred vessels in the groundfish fishery, 100 in the lobster fishery.

Because of the unique proximity to major fishing grounds such as the Georges and Stellwagen Banks, combined with its deep sheltered harbor, Gloucester will always be a major player in the fisheries along the eastern seaboard.





The military has conducted training and combat operations at sea for centuries. Prior to 1972, the military also disposed of excess, obsolete or unserviceable munitions en route to port or as part of planned disposals. In the 1970s, our military stopped sea disposal of munitions and now only allows such disposals during an onboard ship emergency.

Because of these and other training activities, the Army recognizes that munitions may inadvertently be encountered during commercial and recreational activities. To address this potential, the Army has developed an explosives safety guide, *Munitions at Sea, A Guide for Commercial Maritime Industries*, to advise people who work in our Nation's maritime industries of the potential hazards associated with munitions inadvertently recovered from the sea and the actions that should be taken to help ensure safety.

This guide, which has been coordinated with the U.S. Coast Guard and the Department of Defense Explosives Safety Board, is one of a series of guides the Army is developing as part of its UXO Safety Education Program's tool box. This safety program is publicly available at www.denix.osd.mil/UXOSafety.

The Army hopes this guide and its website will raise public awareness about the potential explosive hazards that may be encountered and



promote public safety. During commercial fishing, clamming, or dredging operations, nets, bottomtending gear, and dredges may catch or dredge up munitions from the ocean. These munitions should be considered as presenting a serious danger to a vessel and its crew. - Statement by Mr. Addison D. (Tad) Davis, IV, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (Environment, Safety and Occupational Health) (DASA(ESOH)).

Here are some tips on how to respond if you suspect you have encountered munitions at sea. Remember the three R's (Recognize, Retreat, Report).

### RECOGNIZE

Mariners are cautioned they could encounter munitions anywhere during commercial operations, such as fishing or dredging.

• Munitions include those that have been lying dormant in sea or fresh water for many years, are extremely DANGEROUS.

• Often, munitions that are discovered on land or recovered from the sea are referred to as "duds" or "UXO" (unexploded ordnance), and such munitions can explode when handled.

• Munitions submerged in sea or fresh water for any length of time may be:

o Like new and easy to identify,

o Heavily encrusted with sea growth and difficult to identify.

### CHEMICAL MUNITIONS AND CHEMICAL AGENTS

Beginning in WWI, the Department of Defense (then, the Department of War) designed chemical agents to kill, seriously injure, or incapacitate an enemy. In the past, the U.S. and other countries sea-

dumped both munitions with chemical agents in bulk, such as 55gallon drums filled with chemical agents. As a result, some munitions or drums recovered from the sea may contain chemical agents.

### CHEMICAL AGENTS PRESENT A SERIOUS DANGER TO A VESSEL AND ITS CREW

Vessel crews should be alert for abnormal conditions that may indicate the presence of chemical agents:

• Unusual smells to tackle or fish;

• A stinging sensation in the eyes or burning, irritated skin;

- Corroded containers or
- suspicious clay-like lumps.

If chemical agents are suspected, immediate action is necessary to protect the crew and vessel.

• Close all doors and hatches;

• Shut down all ventilation systems;

• Steam into the wind to carry contaminants away from crew;

• Move all crew members up wind;

• Contact the Coast Guard for assistance.

In case of contact with chemical agents, immediately rinse with large amounts of water (if possible, warm soapy water), even if no effects are felt. Crew members should not work in a contaminated area and every effort should be made to prevent the spreading of contaminants.

Fishing vessels that have come into contact with chemical agents must not bring their catch ashore until it has been checked and released by the appropriate state's Department of Environmental Health. Sea life contaminated by chemical agents is unsuitable for human or animal consumption.

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## Highly Migratory Species **Mandatory** Identification Workshops

NOAA Fisheries Service is proposing mandatory Highly Migratory Species (HMS) identification workshops for shark dealers as part of the **Consolidated Atlantic HMS Fishery** Management Plan. These workshops are intended to reduce the number of sharks listed as "unclassified" (i.e., unidentified) to improve quota monitoring and stock assessments. Approximately 20 percent of sharks landed are listed as "unclassified" by

dealers. All Federally permitted shark dealers would be required to complete a workshop, resulting in a multi-year (2, 3, or 5 years) certification, by January 1, 2007. If the permitted dealer was unable to attend, or is not directly involved in dealer activities, then a proxy (designee) could be sent to attend. Dealers that cannot provide proof of workshop certification would not be allowed to renew their permit in 2007. NOAA Fisheries

Continuation of the Emergency Closure of Federal No Due to the Toxin that Courses Paralytic Shellfish Poiso

Service is accepting comments on the proposed workshops and is requesting comments on proxy designation until March 1, 2006.

For further information or to submit a comment, please contact the HMS Management Division, 1315 East West Hwy, Silver Spring, MD 20910, phone 301-713-2347. In addition, comments may be submitted via fax to 301-427-2592 or via email to SF1060303D@noaa.gov.

## **Red** Tide

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changed from undetectable levels of PSP to toxic levels within two days. Also, new species were found to be contaminated, including American oysters and bay quahogs.

In New Hampshire, the HAB started earlier than normal and both lasted longer and was more toxic than any other year on record. At its peak, the HAB moved to inshore estuarine areas not typically affected, such as Little Bay.

The State of Massachusetts was affected not only by the large pulse of HAB cells being carried into State waters from the north, but by the unusual circulation pattern established in May as a result of two northeasters. This drove the HAB cells into Cape Cod Bay and even through the Cape Cod Canal. Typically, coastal Alexandrium blooms do not affect coastal waters of Massachusetts, except Cape Ann and waters to the north, and occasionally in Massachusetts Bay. The 2005 event was the worst HAB outbreak in the state in at least 30 years. Record high toxin levels were set in 17 locations and there were toxic shellfish in new parts of Cape Cod Bay, Nantucket Sound, south of Martha's Vineyard,



and in the extreme northern portion of Buzzards Bay for the first time ever. The State of Massachusetts closed over 1.3 million acres of shellfish beds (out of about 1.8 million acres total).

For the first time since the early 1990's, the HAB extended to a large area of Federal waters around Massachusetts. As a result of the extremely high levels of Alexandrium, NOAA Fisheries Service Northeast Region closed approximately 15,000 square nautical miles on June 14, 2005, to the harvest of surfclams, ocean quahogs and whole scallops. Scallop "meat" (the adductor muscle) does not store PSP and was always legal to harvest. During the summer, thanks to cooperative efforts by fishermen and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, enough samples were obtained of surfclams and ocean quahogs to determine that these species were no longer toxic, and on

September 9, 2005, NOAA Fisheries Service reopened the southern portion of the area it closed in June for the harvest of these species. The northern portion of the area (north and east of Cape Cod) remains closed to harvesting surfclams and ocean quahogs. The entire area is still closed to harvesting

whole scallops.

Looking to the future: Due to the intensity and extent of the 2005 HAB event, more outbreaks are expected in southern New England waters over the next decade. It is impossible to predict, however, whether 2006 will experience a significant HAB event.

The extensive, prolonged closures of shellfish beds have had a significant impact on harvesters. At the request of the respective Governors, Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez has declared that the commercial shellfish harvests in Massachusetts and Maine have suffered a commercial fishery failure. This determination opens a door to Congressional funding for disaster assistance, which may be provided in the future. Congress has been considering providing such assistance, but has not yet made a decision.

## Update on Take Reduction Plan Atlantic Large Whales

Under the 1994 amendments to the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), NOAA Fisheries Service is required to develop and implement take

reduction plans to assist in the recovery or prevent the depletion of strategic marine mammal stocks that interact with Category I and II fisheries (i.e., those with frequent or occasional mortality and serious injury of marine mammals). The Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP) was implemented in 1997 to reduce the incidental serious injury and mortality of right, humpback, and fin whales in commercial gillnet and trap/pot fisheries. The measures identified in the ALWTRP were also intended to benefit minke whales, which are not designated as a strategic stock, but are known to be incidentally taken in gillnet and trap/pot

fisheries. Since its implementation, the ALWTRP has been modified on several occasions to address the serious injury and mortality of large whales due to entanglement in commercial fishing gear.

In 2005, NOAA Fisheries Service determined that additional modifications to the ALWTRP were warranted to meet the goals of the MMPA and Endangered Species Act (ESA) and published a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in February 2005. The DEIS identifies alternatives for amending the plan and analyzes the impacts of the proposed amendments on the human environment (i.e., biological, social, and economic factors). The six alternatives, including a "no action" or status quo alternative, to modify the ALWTRP are described and analyzed in detail in

## Addressing Groundfish Mortality Groundfish Fishery

Despite the recent achievements in reducing fishing effort and mortality in the groundfish fishery, based upon the most recent assessment of the status of groundfish stocks (August 2005), the fishing mortality on several stocks is higher than allowed under the Northeast Multispecies Fishery Management Plan's (FMP) rebuilding program. Over this past year the New **England Fishery Management** Council (Council) has been developing Framework Adjustment (FW) 42 to the FMP, which will implement measures to further reduce fishing mortality in the groundfish fishery for six groundfish stocks. However, since FW 42 will not be in place for the start of the 2006 fishing year on May 1, emergency management measures are being considered.

On February 1-2, 2006, the Council adopted a preferred alternative for FW 42 and voted to submit the framework to NOAA Fisheries Service. This action includes: Differential days-at-sea (DAS) counting in the inshore portions of the Gulf of Maine (GOM) and in a large area in southern New England, whereby vessels fishing in these areas would be charged DAS at the rate of 2 to 1; several new and/or reduced trip limits; a continuation of the DAS Leasing Program and the Regular B DAS Program; a new Fixed Gear Sector for longline and gillnet vessels; a mandatory Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) requirement; and a seasonal GOM closure area and an increase in the minimum size of GOM cod to 24 inches for both

the DEIS. In June 2005, a proposed rule was published in the Federal Register, which describes how modifications to the ALWTRP will be implemented. Public comments were accepted on both the DEIS and proposed rule.

Presently, the agency is considering comments received on the DEIS and proposed rule, and identifying a preferred alternative in a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for implementation in a final rule. The FEIS as well as the final rule are expected to publish in 2006. Details on the FEIS and final rule will be provided in a future issue of the Regional newsletter.

For additional details regarding the ALWTRP rulemaking process, contact Diane Borggard, ALWTRP Coordinator at 978-281-9300 x. 6503 or Diane.Borggard@noaa.gov. Related information can be found at http://www.nero.noaa.gov/ whaletrp/.

private recreational and charter/party vessels. In addition to this action, an automatic Amendment 13 default measure will take effect on May 1, 2006, which will reduce the number of available Category A DAS in the 2006-2008 fishing years by revising the Category A/B ratio from 60/40 to 55/45.

Management measures included in FW 42 target fishing mortality reductions for the following stocks: GOM cod, GOM/Cape Cod yellowtail flounder, Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic yellowtail flounder, Georges Bank winter flounder, Southern New England/ Mid-Atlantic winter flounder, and white hake. Fishing mortality reductions for Georges Bank yellowtail flounder will be achieved through a reduction in the size of the total allowable catch.



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## RETREAT

The specific action required will depend on the circumstances. However, if possible, crews should avoid bringing munitions (or suspect munitions) onboard. If a munition is found, a decision must be made whether to retreat by carefully jettisoning the munition, cutting away the gear, or as a last resort, securing the munition onboard and moving the crew away. Great care should be taken to avoid bumping the munition; each action carries risk. **MUNITIONS NOT ONBOARD** 

If an actual or suspect munition is



vessel where wave action may cause contact with the haul.

If a munition is in the gear and has not been brought onboard, try to safely lower it back into the water and, as indicated below, note the position and report it to the U.S. Coast Guard.

If in shallow water (less than 130 feet), lower the munition to the bottom, buoy off the net or dredge recovery lines (remain in the immediate area).

If in deep water, stream the munition as far aft as possible and maintain steerage as necessary. Remain in the area while awaiting assistance.

## MUNITIONS ONBOARD

If an actual or suspected munition in the gear is brought over the deck, but remains suspended and can continue to be safely suspended in place or nearby, immediately:

Secure the munition with guy lines to prevent further movement;

Keep the crew away from that area.

If a suspect munition is brought onboard:

Keep unneeded crew members as • far away as possible.

Decide whether to do one of the following:

> Carefully jettison it, or 0

Retain it onboard. 0

If jettisoned, note position and report it.

• Limit handling and avoid hitting or bending any part of the munition;

Stow the munition on deck as far away as possible from heat sources, vibration and the crew, but limit handling;

Firmly chock and last the •

munition to prevent movement;

Cover and/or wet to minimize the potential for:

> o Deterioration of metal parts and release of any fill,

Explosives to dry out and 0 become sensitive to shock;

Keep crew away from item;

Request assistance (Channel 16-156,800 MHz).

If within 2 or 3 hours of land, the safest measure is to notify the U.S. Coast Guard and move to a rendezvous area offshore.

### REPORT

When actual or suspect munitions are encountered at sea, the vessel's captain should ensure the U.S. Coast Guard is notified and provided the information listed below, as soon as possible. (Note: If a munition is encountered while in port [e.g., during offloading, or processing] call 911.)

1. The vessels position (use World Geodetic System 1984 [WGS-84] for reporting).

2. If the exact position is unknown, give approximate coordinates, or a range and bearing from a charted feature.

3. The activity being conducted when the munition was encountered (e.g., fishing, dredging).

4. A general description of the munition's key features (size, shape, fins, props, markings) and condition. (Never attempt to clean the munition for identification purposes, open it, or tamper with it in any way).

The action taken (e.g., stowed or 5. jettisoned).

If jettisoned, also provide: 6. The position of the release, 0 water depth, and buoys or markings used;

A description of any 0 entanglement (e.g., net, dredge) or other details.

7. Any unusual odors, if noticed.

8. Whether the munition was jettisoned:

> 0 In or near a charted munitions dump;

Near (within 1,000 yards of) any surface or subsurface structures.

### **REMEMBER - THREE Rs**

**1. RECOGNIZE:** Recognize when vou may have encountered a munition.

2. RETREAT: If you know or suspect you have encountered a munition. Jettison it or secure it and keep the crew out of the immediate area.

**3. REPORT:** Immediately notify the U.S. Coast Guard of the vessel's or munition's location and provide a description of the munition, emergency contacts:

### In port: Call 911

At sea: Use Channel 16 (156.800 MHz).

For additional information on this and related issues, visit the U.S. Army's UXO Safety Education Website at: www.denix.osd.mil/ UXOSafety.





## Extended to Scallop General Category Vessels Vessel Monitoring System

Throughout the fall, the Region devoted time to the implementation of new Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) requirements for the open access portion of the scallop fleet (the General Category fleet). The limited access scallop fleet has been required



to use VMS since 1994, but General Category vessels were not required to install this monitoring tool. The New **England Fishery Management** Council determined that VMS should be extended to the General Category fleet and developed new requirements in Framework 17 to the Scallop Fishery Management Plan. The regulations to implement the requirement were published in late August, kicking off a flood of inquiries from vessel owners seeking information about the new requirements. The number of vessel owners seeking VMS units for the fishery outpaced the availability of



installers, and the initial deadline for installation was delayed as a result. To date, 515 General Category vessels have come into compliance with the VMS requirements. The successful implementation of this new program required close cooperation between the Region, Council, and industry.

## **Gear Buyback Program**

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New Jersey; Ocean City, Maryland; and Norfolk, Virginia. Approximately 30 participating fishermen arrived with their coiled line, which was placed into large cardboard shipping boxes (each held approximately 450 pounds of line). Over 100,000 pounds of floating groundlines was collected and then shipped to Conigliaro Industries, a Massachusetts-based waste management company that specializes in environmentally sound recycling and disposal of unique and difficult solid wastes. Fishermen

received vouchers for a dollar amount equal to \$2.00 per pound of floating line that they exchanged. They have until April 19, 2006 to use their vouchers toward the purchase of sinking or neutrally buoyant line from a participating dealer, such as Friendship Trap Company, New England Marine and Industrial, and Fishermen's Supply.

Greg DiDomenico, Executive Director of the Garden State Seafood,



believes this program was a success in that it monetarily helped fishermen to convert their gear, but may also have encouraged fishermen to become more



active in large whale entanglement issues. In addition, Sonny Gwin, a lobster and sea bass trap/pot fisherman in Ocean City said that the line exchange program removed a significant portion of floating groundlines from the area between Delaware and Virginia. NOAA Fisheries Service spent approximately \$210,000 replacing the floating line.

### MAILING LIST

If you have questions or would like to be added to our mailing list, contact Marla Trollan, Editor and Regional Outreach Coordinator, at 978-281-9388 or email: marla.trollan@noaa.gov. You may also visit our website at: http://www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/

## Monkfish Related Research Activities New Research Set-Aside Program

The NOAA Fisheries Northeast Regional Office has been working on the newly adopted Monkfish Days-at-Sea (DAS) Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program. RSA programs provide an innovative way to partner researchers and the fishing industry to conduct high priority research without expending Federal funds. This program, which was implemented in Amendment 2 to the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan, sets aside 500 monkfish DAS annually to be allocated to fishing vessels for the purpose of conducting monkfish related research activities. The intent of this RSA program is for fishing vessels to utilize these research DAS to conduct monkfish research, rather than their allocated monkfish DAS, eliminating any cost to the vessel associated with using a monkfish DAS. A notice published in the Federal Register on

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ressel associated with sh DAS. A notice e Federal Register on September 13, 2005, announced the first year of Monkfish RSA Program.

Applications were accepted through October 13, 2005, and a total of three applications were received by this deadline. Approved projects would be conducted during the 2006 monkfish fishing year, which begins May 1, 2006, and ends on April 30, 2007.

Following the approval of research projects under the Monkfish RSA Program, NOAA Fisheries Service will publish a notice in the Federal Register reallocating the remaining research DAS as exempted DAS. We will also notify the fishing industry of the availability of these exempted DAS for use in research projects during the 2006 fishing year. In order to take advantage of these available exempted DAS, interested parties must submit a request for a monkfish DAS exemption along with a complete application for an Exempted Fishing Permit to the Northeast Regional Office.

# **Region Changes Appearance of Permits New Federal Vessel Permits**

On February 25, 2006, NOAA Fisheries Service Northeast Region will change the appearance of its Federal fishing vessels permits. The main reason for the change is to provide permit holders with a single piece of paper which lists all of the issued permits. Currently, permit holders may receive multiple blue carbon mailers for a single vessel.

Although the size of the permit is changing, the layout of the permit will be similar. All information contained on the current permits will now be consolidated onto one page. The permit will show the effective and expiration dates of each fishery permit listed as well as the vessel's maximum lobster trap allocation, if applicable.

All permits issued after February 24, 2006 will be printed in the new permit format. Any previously issued 2005 or 2006 permits will remain valid until the expiration of those permits. Therefore, if you already have 2005 or 2006 permits in the old format, those permits are still valid and we will not be printing new permits for you. The next time you renew your permits you will receive your permits in the new single page format.

For more information, contact the Northeast Permit Operations at 978-281-9370 or visit the website at: http://www.nero.noaa.gov/permits/



