



Contact: Maggie Mooney-Seus
978-281-9175

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 14, 2010

**NOAA Announces Distribution of 2010 Funds to Further Support New England
Groundfish Fishermen**

Part of Agency's Ongoing Effort to Help Industry Adapt to New Management System

NOAA Fisheries Service today announced that it has awarded an additional \$1.4 million to the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) in 2010 funds so it can continue to assist the groundfish industry as it transitions to a new form of management known as sectors.

"We made a commitment to the industry to provide them with the support they need to make sectors work," said Eric Schwaab, assistant administrator, NOAA Fisheries Service. "We are also appreciative to GMRI for continuing to work with us to help distribute these funds."

On May 1, 2010, the groundfish fishery began operating under a dual management system. Vessels had the option of fishing together under a quota in groups called sectors, or fishing under the existing system of restrictions on the number of days a vessel can fish, catch per trip, and area that can be fished. For the first time, all catch is being governed by quotas on total catch, including all landings and discards. The vessels that opted to join a sector represent about 98% of the historic groundfish catch.

In October, 2009, NOAA awarded an initial \$1.7 million to GMRI to administer and support sector implementation, mostly through the distribution of small grants to sectors to help them offset start up costs. This year's funding will be used to provide more direct support for sector operations (e.g., sector manager salary, office and equipment rental, etc.) and cover dockside monitoring expenses.

To date the agency has committed over \$47.2 million to the groundfish industry. These funds were distributed as direct grants to the industry, for training new sector managers, to cover dockside and at-sea catch monitoring and for cooperative research with the fishing industry to improve gear and fishing methods so that more of the available catch can be brought to shore. NOAA also is considering expanding the number of regulatory exemptions available to sectors to provide them more flexibility to target healthy stocks such as a program to allow the seasonal use of 6-inch mesh gillnets in the GOM Regulated Mesh Area (RMA) to target haddock.

To provide comments on these proposed exemptions please visit the Federal Register website at

<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/hotnews/2010Funds/2010MultiSectorOpsContactsPR.pdf>

Another major focus for NOAA has been to provide ongoing customer service to the fishing industry. For instance, during the first few weeks of the fishing year, staff were on hand 7-days a week to answer fishermen's questions. Staff continue to conduct regular conference calls with sector managers to track how things are going and deal with operational issues.

The agency also conducted a series of 13 public meetings for the broader fishing community to explain the new management measures and provide technical training on software for reporting the amount of fish caught. New web-based tools were also developed for

fishermen to view their individual catch information and sector managers to have timely access to sector vessel's data for catch monitoring and allocation tracking.

“Fishermen have had to make some significant adjustments in the way they do business due to lower catch limits needed to rebuild fish stocks and the expanded use of sectors in the fishery, helping them through this transition remains a priority for our agency,” Patricia Kurkul, Regional Administrator, Northeast Region, NOAA Fisheries Service. “Early indications seem to show that fishermen are meeting new challenges head on because overall landings are only slightly down over last year and total groundfish revenues are up.”

NOAA understands and predicts changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources. Visit us at <http://www.noaa.gov> <<http://www.noaa.gov/>> or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/noaa.lubchenco>.