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**NOAA, Fishermen, and Seafood Dealers Prepare
for New Era in Northeast Groundfish Management**

In Portsmouth, N.H. today, NOAA's Fisheries Service is meeting with local fishermen to answer questions about new groundfish rules. The meeting is the latest event in a year-long multi-million dollar effort by NOAA to ready the industry for major changes that become effective on May 1, 2010, and are for many an entirely new way of doing business.

"We are undertaking a new direction in fishery management in the Northeast," said Patricia Kurkul, NOAA's Fisheries Service Northeast Regional Administrator. "The level of both collaboration and detail required is unprecedented for fishery management in our region," she continued. "These meetings allow us to work closely with fishermen to ease the transition, anticipate problems, and set up ways to work through any issues that arise as the new measures come on line."

Beginning in May 2010, the groundfish fishery will operate under a dual management system. Vessels may fish together in groups called sectors, or may fish 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 will be governed by quotas on landings and on discards.

Since April 2009, NOAA, sector participants and seafood dealers have worked together to prepare necessary documents and ready the data reporting systems, equipment, and people that are needed to monitor catch limits. Direct contacts have been made with the majority of the 1500 vessels and 600 seafood dealers affected by the new rules, through more than 200 one-on-one meetings, nine collaborative workshops, and regular, ongoing dialogue to further define industry and agency roles and responsibilities beginning May 1.

During March, meetings similar to the one in Portsmouth today were held in New Bedford and Gloucester, Mass., Portland, Maine, and Point Judith, R.I. NOAA's Fisheries Service Northeast regional office will host a telephone "town hall" conference call on April 14 to provide another opportunity for the industry to ask questions and talk to NOAA staff about the new measures.

During the fishing year, NOAA will hold regular meetings with sector representatives to share lessons learned, to identify and implement any more efficient methods found for reporting or managing information, to help sectors with data quality control, and to respond to emerging needs. NOAA will also be working closely with the New England Fishery Management Council to conduct a second set of outreach meetings with the broader fishing community to track how things are going in late May and early June.

In all, \$47.1 million has been committed to get the new management underway and to support the industry for the first year. This includes direct grants to sectors to cover planning and organizational costs, training support, covering monitoring costs both dock-side and at sea, developing new technologies to ease monitoring and reporting tasks, and cooperative research to improve gear and fishing methods so that more of the available catch can be landed.

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