



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Contact Connie Barclay
 (301) 713-2370

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 3, 2005

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE TO AWARD \$700,000 FOR PROJECTS THROUGH THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT *Funding Will Benefit Conservation and Research*

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service will award more than \$700,000 to **seven** Atlantic coast states and one territory to conserve and protect marine species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Section 6 of the ESA provides NOAA Fisheries with the authority to enter into cooperative agreements with states and territories and to provide financial assistance to support **conservation programs in those states and territories**. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The funds, which will be matched in a three-to-one cost-share (federal to state funding), will support research and outreach and management efforts for conservation of ESA-listed species, candidate species, and species of concern under NOAA Fisheries' jurisdiction along the Atlantic coast and in the Caribbean. Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Maryland, New York, New Jersey and Puerto Rico will receive funding awards this year.

The funded projects include activities such as assessing the health of marine turtles in Maryland, monitoring smalltooth sawfish in Florida, evaluating the movement of dam-locked sturgeon in South Carolina, investigating habitat use by loggerhead sea turtles in Georgia, and determining the status of marine fishes in New Jersey. Providing information for the public on species conservation is an important component of many of the projects.

These projects were selected through a competitive grant proposal process, which was funded and implemented for the first time in 2003. To be eligible for this grant program, a state or territory must first enter into a cooperative agreement with NOAA Fisheries that demonstrates a commitment to conservation and the ability to implement conservation programs. To date, eight states and two U.S. territories have entered into section 6 cooperative agreements with NOAA Fisheries. The NOAA Fisheries section 6 program is expected to expand in the future, and NOAA Fisheries welcomes agreements with any state or U.S. territory interested in conserving their marine or anadromous species.

"NOAA Fisheries is very pleased to be a part of this cooperative program to help protected species," said Bill Hogarth, assistant administrator for NOAA Fisheries. "Any time the states and the federal government can work together to conserve and protect our nation's marine life, we all win."

This ESA program serves as a reminder of the importance of local as well as national conservation efforts. Locally-based conservation efforts are essential for achieving conservation and recovery of threatened and endangered species as well as for advancing national conservation programs.

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

xxx

On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA Fisheries: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>