



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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NOAA Fisheries Service Exchanges Floating Line in Mid-Atlantic Pot/Trap Gear *Free Replacement Line is Safer for Whales*

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries Service), in partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (Foundation), collected more than 200,000 pounds of floating fishing line from more than three dozen commercial pot/trap fishing operations in the Mid-Atlantic in exchange for vouchers to purchase replacement line that sinks.

"Sinking line is less likely to form loops off the bottom of the ocean and entangle large whales, so it's safer for whales," said David Gouveia, coordinator for NOAA Fisheries Service's marine mammal protection program in the Northeast. "This offer gave the fleet a head start on converting their gear to sinking line, which may soon be required."

The program was designed by NOAA Fisheries Service and managed by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. It was modeled after a pilot program initiated in Massachusetts during 2004 through a grant by the Foundation's National Whale Conservation Fund, in which NOAA is also a partner.

About 1,000 fishermen who use pot or trap gear in the region were contacted by NOAA Fisheries Service last fall with eligibility information. Thirty-eight eligible fishermen accepted the offer. Under the program terms, they were compensated \$2 for each pound of floating line exchanged. Collection points were set up in Point Pleasant and in Sea Isle City, NJ, Ocean City, MD, and Norfolk, VA. Compensation was by voucher, good at any one of nine designated gear dealers for purchasing replacement line that sinks. Dealers will be compensated for the face value of the vouchers.

Retired line was trucked to Conigliaro Industries, a Massachusetts-based waste management company specializing in environmentally sound recycling and disposal of unique and difficult solid wastes.

"We spent about \$210,000 replacing line, \$50,000 on the recycling effort, and \$50,000 on running the program," said Gouveia.

"This exchange program replaced much of the poly groundline used around here with sink rope. Without the program, fishermen in this area would have been hard pressed to come up with the money to make this change over," said Sonny Gwin, who participated in the program. Gwin has been fishing for 30 years, and has spent half that time in the lobster and sea bass pot/trap fisheries in Ocean City, Maryland.

Greg DiDomenico, executive director of the Garden State Seafood Association, said the exchange program may have additional benefits. "It is helpful to receive the vouchers for the old trawl rope, but the outreach might also increase participation in the future, and perhaps encourage the individual fishermen to attend meetings and public hearings due to the fact that they had the opportunity to work with NOAA Fisheries staff and feel more comfortable with the people who are going to be involved in all of the fixed gear issues," he said.

"The Foundation is pleased to play a crucial role in developing and supporting the implementation of this new technology," said Foundation Executive Director, Jeff Trandahl. "This project exemplifies how the Foundation supports creative solutions to conservation challenges—solutions that work for people as well as the natural resources we cherish."

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitats through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service 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.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is a nonprofit organization established by Congress in 1984 and dedicated to the conservation of fish, wildlife and plants, and the habitat on which they depend. The Foundation creates partnerships between the public and private sectors to strategically invest in conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources.

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 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 and nearly 60 countries to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes.

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On the Web:

NOAA Fisheries Service: www.nmfs.noaa.gov

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation: www.nfwf.org

NOAA: www.noaa.gov