



JOHN ELIAS BALDACCI
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF
MARINE RESOURCES
21 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0021

GEORGE D. LAPOINTE
COMMISSIONER

Maine Department of Marine Resources to Begin Purchasing Groundfish Permits
Permit Banking Program to Restore and Enhance Fishing Opportunities for Small-Scale Maine Groundfish Fishermen
June 28, 2010

After over a year of collaborative development with NOAA Fisheries Service, the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) has launched the Maine Groundfish Permit Banking Program. On June 28, DMR released a Request for Proposals (RFP) to purchase Federal Northeast Multispecies Permits. Once permits are acquired, the associated access rights will be distributed to small-scale fishermen in rural Maine ports.

"We want to preserve Maine's proud fishing heritage, which is made up of coastal fishing communities, as well as to increase fishing opportunities for small-scale fishermen throughout our state," said George Lapointe, Commissioner, Maine DMR.

NOAA Fisheries has provided \$2.9 million to support this effort, which the DMR will administer. Other New England states are working to develop similar permit banks, but Maine's program will lead the way.

"Our goal is to create and protect sustainable local fisheries," said Patricia Kurkul, Northeast Regional Administrator for NOAA Fisheries Service. "Based on what we learn through this pilot program, we hope to be able to develop permit banks in other states and regions."

DMR is soliciting bids from individuals who wish to sell their Federal Northeast Multispecies Permits. DMR will hold a bidder's conference on July 7 to help potential bidders understand the process, and bids will be due by July 28. A scoring formula and review board will ensure only strong bids are selected.

"With limited funds and the future of Maine's many rural fishing ports on the line, we intend to be smart shoppers" said Terry Stockwell, DMR's Director of External Affairs. "We want to get this program up and running with a strong start – only bids that will result in maximized opportunities for Maine groundfishermen will be selected."

Permit banks are expected to provide owners of fishing vessels with limited or no groundfish fishing history an opportunity to lease additional fishing days or allocation at a reasonable cost. Anyone interested in becoming a recipient of permit bank fishing access must meet certain qualifying criteria and must agree to land their catch in Maine ports.

The RFP process will take several months, with successful bids being announced later this summer. Once permits are purchased, DMR will begin the complicated process of distributing fishing rights to eligible vessels. Due to federal regulations that dictate when and how permits may join sectors, the distribution phase of the program may not begin until Fishing Year 2011.

"We want to help Maine's fishermen as soon as possible" said Stockwell "but we won't know our options until we have the permits in hand so we're taking this one step at a time. Right now our focus is on purchasing permits that will provide maximum benefits to Maine's groundfishermen and fishing communities"

For more information, or to obtain a copy of the RFP, contact Togue Brawn at 207-624-6558 or togue.brawn@maine.gov.