



Contact: Maggie Mooney-Seus
NOAA Fisheries Service
978-281-9175
Gail Mastrati
Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
401-222-4700 ext. 2402

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 13 2010

NOAA and Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management Announce \$1 Million Initiative to Establish Rhode Island Groundfish Permit Bank

Goal to Preserve and Enhance Fishing Opportunities for Small-Boat Groundfish Fishermen

NOAA Fisheries Service and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) today announced a new state-administered permit bank program aimed at supporting the needs and interests of small-boat commercial groundfish fishermen in Rhode Island, during this time of change in the fishery. NOAA is providing \$1 million to support this effort, which the RIDEM will administer in coordination with the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation.

“We want to preserve the diversity of this historic fishery,” said Patricia Kurkul, northeast regional administrator, NOAA Fisheries Service. “That is why we have provided over \$6 million to date to support states that wish to create or augment their own permit banks.”

A permit bank is a collection of fishing permits that are purchased and held by an organization, in this case the state of Rhode Island, and then used to provide additional access rights such as days-at-sea and annual catch share to qualifying fishing vessels. Each permit carries with it a catch history that determines how much fish the vessel can take, or the number of days-at-sea the vessel can fish, in a given year.

This year, the use of sectors to manage the groundfish fishery was expanded. Sectors are groups of fishing vessels which receive a collective share of each of the available annual groundfish stock allocations. Sector shares are based on the individual fishing history of their membership. The new Rhode Island Permit Bank will provide opportunities for owners of small fishing vessels with limited or no groundfish fishing history to lease additional quota or fishing days. This will help fishermen in Point Judith and other Rhode Island ports to achieve stable access to New England groundfish stocks.

To qualify for access to quota from the Rhode Island Permit Bank, a vessel will need to hold a federal limited access Northeast multispecies fishery permit, be based in Rhode Island, be not more than 45 feet in length overall and be enrolled in a sector that is primarily constituted by small-scale vessels. For a limited time and subject to certain conditions, small-scale vessels not in a sector will also be able to lease days-at-sea from the bank.

“We appreciate that NOAA has provided this funding to help Rhode Island fishermen,” said W. Michael Sullivan, director, RIDEM. “While this pilot project is only likely to offer benefits to a relatively small number of fishing vessels, it will allow us to develop the infrastructure for a repository for future permit bank funds large enough to maximize benefits to the Rhode Island fishing industry as a whole.”

RIDEM plans to convene a workshop with the Rhode Island groundfish industry to determine how to administer the program in a way that best meets the needs and interests of the industry.

“The Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation’s involvement in this program reflects the importance of the commercial fishing industry to the State’s economy, and their collaboration will bring important resources to the table that will enable us to develop and implement the program effectively,” added Sullivan.

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