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Governor Patrick Announces Award of Relief Funds for Massachusetts Ground Fishing Industry**\$11.3 million will be distributed to fishing permit holders; \$1.4 million provided to crew members in subsidies and insurance benefits**

BOSTON - Wednesday, August 27, 2008 - Governor Deval Patrick today announced the disbursement this week of \$11.3 million in funds to more than 500 Massachusetts fishermen and fishing businesses who have suffered financial harm due to federal restrictions on groundfish harvesting. In addition to the direct subsidies to commercial fishing permit holders, the Commonwealth will provide \$750,000 to individual crew members by November, and contribute about \$650,000 toward health insurance benefits for fishermen and their families.

The Patrick-Murray Administration previously estimated regional economic losses of \$22 million due to federal regulatory restrictions on groundfishing, and in February 2007 formally requested that the federal government declare a fishery resource disaster. After the federal government denied this request, Senators Edward Kennedy and John Kerry, with the support of the Governor and the Commonwealth's congressional delegation, helped secure a federal appropriation of \$13.4 million to aid the struggling groundfishing industry.

Mainstays of Massachusetts's historic fishing industry, groundfish are species that live on the sea bottom and include commercially important fish such as cod, haddock, and flounder.

"I thank all our Congressional delegation - especially Senators Kennedy and Kerry and Representatives Barney Frank, Bill Delahunt and John Tierney - for obtaining these funds and for working with my team to make sure they get into the hands of Massachusetts fishermen hard hit by federal fishing restrictions," Governor Patrick said. "I look forward to working with them and the fishing industry on a more sustainable approach to fisheries management that both protects our natural resources and supports our coastal communities."

"The over 1,500 miles of Massachusetts coastline and the communities located there are not just part of our history and identity but a vital part of our economy, contributing upwards of \$2 billion each year in fisheries economic activity," said Lieutenant Governor Timothy P. Murray. "Preserving and promoting our fishing industry are important parts of the Patrick-Murray Administration's economic agenda."

On April 15, the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (part of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs's Department of Fish and Game) submitted to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) a detailed plan for distributing \$13 million in relief funds. The plan relied heavily on consultation with industry stakeholders and feedback from individual fishermen at public meetings held in Gloucester, New Bedford and Plymouth in early April. NOAA approved the plan in late May and the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) utilized federal and state fish permit records to determine who qualified for relief payments. After a three-week appeal period that ended July 31, the Division worked to finalize the list of award recipients and amounts. The DMF will issue payments by electronic fund transfers and checks on Friday, August 29.

"Fishing is a longstanding part of the Commonwealth's history and our fishing ports are an integral part of the state's economy, so it's gratifying to see that fishermen will receive this much-needed aid to help them during these difficult times," said Melissa Wagoner, spokeswoman for US Senator Edward Kennedy.

"This funding will help thousands of Massachusetts fishermen and their families who have been struggling because of strict federal regulations," US Senator John Kerry said. "The aid will provide much-needed financial breathing room while groundfish stocks recover. I am proud to have worked with Senator Kennedy, the rest of the Massachusetts Congressional delegation, and Governor Patrick to make sure this assistance gets directly into the hands of those who need it most."

While NOAA allotted \$338,000 to the DMF for administration of the program, the division will expend considerably less than that,

allowing the Commonwealth to contribute up to an additional \$225,000 to the health insurance program.

"I am pleased the federal government recognized the importance of helping a vital industry in the Commonwealth while we all work to create a long-term fisheries management plan that truly works," said House Speaker Salvatore F. DiMasi. "Governor Patrick, Secretary Bowles, Senate President Murray, legislators representing coastal regions and our congressional delegation deserve our praise and thanks for their continued hard work on this important issue."

"The award of this relief funding is great news for the Massachusetts ground fishermen," said Senate President Therese Murray. "They are an important part of our history and our economy, and we must do everything we can to protect their industry. This money will go a long way toward reducing the financial stress that our fishing communities and families have had to endure."

Applicants with federal groundfish permits are receiving relief checks based on the total number of qualified vessels and the number of days at sea that each vessel has been allocated. Approximately \$500 per day at sea will be awarded, with payments averaging \$23,500 per vessel. Those with state permits will receive a subsidy of just under \$10,000 each, based solely on the number of qualified applicants.

"I am very grateful to Governor Patrick, Senator Kennedy, Senator Kerry, and our representatives in Congress for obtaining this emergency assistance for our struggling fishing families," said Angela Sanfilippo, executive director of the Massachusetts Fishermen's Partnership, an umbrella organization of fishing groups, and president of the Gloucester Fishermen's Wives Association. "This financial relief will be much appreciated by captains, crews, and families up and down the Massachusetts coast who make their livings from the sea."

For more information about the groundfish assistance program, [click here](#) to visit the Department of Fish and Game's website.

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