

# Patrick Administration Releases First Round of Groundfish Disaster Assistance

BOSTON – Friday, August 29, 2014 – The Patrick Administration today began releasing federal groundfish disaster assistance, allocating nearly \$2 million to 57 permit holders who have already qualified for funding. This marks the first payments of the Phase 1 groundfish disaster assistance requested by Governor Patrick, approved by the U.S. Department of Commerce and appropriated by Congress.

“We have worked for years, together with our Congressional Delegation and the Obama Administration to get our fishermen the assistance they need to deal with catch share regulations and declining fish stocks,” said Governor Deval Patrick. “We are extremely pleased this critical funding is getting out the door to our fishermen.”

“The Patrick Administration has championed securing much-needed financial assistance for our fishermen who are struggling during these hard times,” said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Maeve Vallely Bartlett. “This money is critical to our fishermen and their families and will help sustain this industry which is so important to Massachusetts.”

In total, Phase 1 will disburse \$6.5 million in assistance reaching approximately 200 permit holders. Phase 1 assistance is designed to target federally permitted fishermen impacted by the groundfish disaster during the fishing period 2010-2013.

Phase 2 assistance, expected to begin in the fall, will provide another \$8.3 million, reaching hundreds more engaged in the fishing industry, including crew members. Phase 2 will focus on providing assistance to a broader population impacted by the fisheries disaster in order to address the ripple effects felt throughout our fishing communities.

This initial round of Phase 1 payments was expedited due to some recipients who are already in the state system as vendors and who did not need any updates to their personal information. All payments will be made as Electronic Funds Transfers, so expedited Phase 1 payments are expected in accounts early next week.

Additional Phase 1 payments will follow as information from prospective recipients is received and processed by the Division of Marine Fisheries.

Governor Patrick first made a request for a disaster declaration to the Department of Commerce in November 2010, asking for direct economic relief to the Massachusetts groundfish fleet for the impact caused by the transition to the catch shares system and harvest cuts forced by changes in resource conditions. In 2012, the Secretary of Commerce declared the Northeast groundfishery disaster and with full support of the Massachusetts delegation, Congress approved \$75 million for six fishery disasters around the nation earlier this year. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) apportioned \$32.8 million to the northeast groundfish industry. Massachusetts is receiving \$14.8 million, the largest share of any state in the region.

"This long delayed direct federal disaster assistance will at least begin to give some relief to fishing families who are experiencing significant hardship during this difficult time – but

we must do more,” said Senator Elizabeth Warren. “I’m committed to working with the Massachusetts Congressional delegation and the Patrick Administration to ensure the rest of the federal aid is distributed as soon as possible and that our fishermen get the support they need.”

“I am pleased that the first distribution of federal assistance is finally being delivered to our fishermen,” said Senator Edward J. Markey. “I want to thank Governor Deval Patrick for his ongoing work to make sure federal assistance reaches all Massachusetts fishermen and communities affected by this disaster. While this is an important first step towards helping our struggling fishermen, there is still much work to be done. I will continue to work with our fishermen, Governor Patrick, the entire Massachusetts Congressional delegation, and NOAA to ensure our proud fishing tradition will continue for another four centuries and beyond.”

“I’m pleased that the first phase of disaster aid will be reaching fishermen on the North Shore in the coming days. However, this is just the first step in the process and I will continue to work to ensure that all fishermen affected by the disaster declaration receive the aid they need and deserve,” said Congressman John Tierney.

“I applaud this critical support for the fishing industry, particularly those who faced setbacks due to natural disasters and stock shortages,” said Congressman Stephen F. Lynch. “I am pleased to see this money finally making its way into the pipeline. I commend Governor Patrick for crafting a proposal that will equitably distribute this important federal aid.”

“I am glad to see that the first phase of disaster assistance will soon be distributed. As we near the two year anniversary of the Department of Commerce’s disaster declaration for our groundfish fishery, I hope that the following phase of disbursement reaches the men and women for whom this funding was intended,” said Congressman William Keating.

Massachusetts held eight public meetings to date to engage fishermen and other stakeholders on developing spending plans to ensure the groundfishing industry continues to be sustainable for future generations.

“The Commonwealth, through the Division of Marine Fisheries, is grateful to be able to disperse this federal disaster funding to eligible fishermen who have experienced adverse impacts to their businesses,” said Department of Fish and Game (DFG) Commissioner Mary Griffin. “Since the money was first made available to the state in mid-August, we have worked hard to expedite these payments to our fishermen in Massachusetts.”

DFG is responsible for promoting the conservation and enjoyment of the Commonwealth's natural resources. DFG carries out this mission through land protection and wildlife habitat management, management of inland and marine fish and wildlife species, and ecological restoration of fresh water, salt water, and terrestrial habitats. DFG promotes enjoyment of the Massachusetts environment through outdoor skills workshops, fishing festivals and other educational programs, and by enhancing access to the Commonwealth's rivers, lakes, and coastal waters.