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**NOAA and Maine Department of Marine Resources Partner to Conduct Pilot Permit Bank**  
*Goal to Enhance Fishing Opportunities for Small-Scale Groundfish Fishermen*

NOAA Fisheries Service and the State of Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) today announced a pilot program to obtain fishing vessel permits and then lease the access rights associated with the permits to small-scale fishermen in rural fishing ports in Maine. NOAA is providing at least \$1 million to support this effort, which the DMR will administer.

“Our goal is to create and protect sustainable local fisheries,” said Patricia Kurkul, northeast regional administrator, NOAA Fisheries Service. “Based on what we learn through this pilot, we hope to be able to develop permit banks in other states and regions.”

A permit bank is a collection of fishing permits that are purchased and held by an organization, in this case the State of Maine, 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 2010. Days-at-sea can also be leased to qualifying vessels to participate in cooperative research projects. 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. This will make it much more economically viable for these small fishing vessels to participate in the fishery.

Anyone interested in participating in the pilot project must meet certain qualifying criteria, which includes, their vessel must be permitted to fish in the federal limited access Northeast multispecies fishery, their vessel must be 45 feet or less in registered length overall, and they must reside in or operate their vessel from a community with no more than 30,000 residents.

“We want to preserve Maine’s proud fishing heritage as well as increase fishing opportunities for small-scale fishermen and coastal communities,” said George Lapointe, Commissioner, Maine DMR.

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>.

The Maine Department of Marine Resources provides leadership in marine policy, the management of marine resources, the development of sustainable marine resource-based business and the protection of the marine environment. To learn more go to: <http://www.maine.gov/dmr/index.htm>