



David E. Pierce
Director

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

251 Causeway Street, Suite 400
Boston, Massachusetts 02114

(617)626-1520
fax (617)626-1509



Charles D. Baker
Governor

Karyn E. Polito
Lieutenant Governor

Matthew A. Beaton
Secretary

George N. Peterson, Jr.
Commissioner

Mary-Lee King
Deputy Commissioner

Name
Address
Address

October 9, 2015

RE: Announcement of Phase 3 Federal Groundfish Disaster Aid Program

Dear Name on Permit:

You are receiving this informational mailing because you are a federal limited access multispecies permit holder homeported in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as of April 30, 2015.

DMF is implementing the third and final phase of groundfish disaster aid following National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) grant approval. Phase 3 allocates \$6.7-million to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to stabilize the commercial groundfishery in Massachusetts with NMFS-GARFO encouragement that active permit holders be given "top priority". An additional non-discretionary \$200,000 has been provided to DMF for support in developing an industry-funded buyback program.

Following meetings with an Industry-based Working Group and input from public meetings in late July, DMF finalized a spending plan that utilizes a majority of the \$6.7-million to support the continued viability of the commercial federal groundfish fishery in Massachusetts. Based on public feedback DMF has eliminated earlier-proposed funding for legal services and has amended direct-aid criteria to better reflect port-specific characteristics of the active groundfish fleet.

Following are details of the final Phase 3 spending plan.

1. Industry-funded Buyback

NMFS has specified \$200,000 for DMF to partner with industry in developing a viable industry-funded buyback program. DMF will form an Industry Steering Committee that will work with a hired contractor to develop a buyback proposal for a referendum vote. Funds will go towards the contractor and other administrative costs.

2. Direct Aid to Federal Limited Access Multispecies Permit Holders:

DMF has selected two-filters to better target active fishermen in the federal groundfishery throughout the Commonwealth. Eligible limited-access multispecies federal permit holders with a Massachusetts homeport as of April 30, 2015 meeting one of the two following criteria would pre-qualify for a flat rate payment:

- landed at least 10,000-lbs. of groundfish¹ in any one Fishing Year (FY) from FY2012 to FY2014; OR
- was observed on at least one groundfish sector trip in FY 2014.

¹ Groundfish for qualification purposes means the following thirteen species: cod, haddock, yellowtail flounder, pollock, plaice, witch flounder, white hake, windowpane flounder, Atlantic halibut, winter flounder, redfish, Atlantic wolffish, and ocean pout.

You will receive a concurrent letter in this mailing notifying you of your pre-qualification status with respect to direct aid for permit holders.

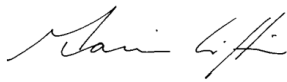
Consistent with Phase 2, no permit banks will be qualified for a Phase 3 direct aid payment.

3. **Increased Fishing Opportunities:** DMF will assist fishermen's efforts to acquire federal experimental fishing permits (EFPs) to use small-mesh nets in areas such as off Gloucester for whiting or better define where spawning fish are found (or not found).
4. **Industry Based Survey (IBS)**
Given the poor stock of Gulf of Maine (GOM) cod, low catch limits, and many fishermen's claims that the cod status is better than currently assessed, DMF is proposing a new GOM cod IBS. Relying on fishermen's guidance with additional input from the Massachusetts Marine Fisheries Institute (MFI), NMFS and the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC), DMF will administer a three-year study in the southwestern portion of the GOM where remnants of the GOM cod stock currently reside. The IBS will:
 - i. provide another science source (resource data and information) for use in assessments;
 - ii. test fishermen's hypothesis about GOM cod redistributing offshore in response to warming water;
 - iii. demonstrate relevance and importance of a GOM cod IBS for improving our understanding of the distribution of cod at times and in areas when the NEFSC surveys are not performed;
 - iv. acquire additional scientific data on other groundfish stocks in the survey area;
 - v. enable minimum estimates of swept-area biomass; and
 - vi. determine the IBS's potential for providing indices of abundance.

More information on this, as well as the overall program, can be found online at www.mass.gov/marinefisheries, click on the link for "Groundfish Disaster Economic Assistance Program."

Should you have any questions about the Commonwealth's Phase 3 Groundfish Disaster Aid Program, please contact Samantha Andrews at 617.626.1564.

Sincerely,



Melanie Griffin
Fishery Policy Analyst