



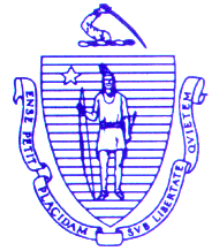
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# Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Division of Marine Fisheries

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October 1, 2015  
*Marine Fisheries Advisory*

### ANNOUNCEMENT OF BIN 3 APPROVAL FOR FEDERAL GROUND FISH DISASTER AID

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The Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) is implementing the third and final bin of groundfish disaster aid following National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) grant approval. The federal grant has an official start date of October 1, 2015. Bin 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 and 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.

Following are details of the final Bin 3 spending plan.

#### 1. **Industry-funded Buyback**

NMFS has specified \$200,000 for DMF to partner with industry in developing a viable permit 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 contract hire and other administrative costs.

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

DMF has selected a two-filter criteria to better target active fishermen in the 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 groundfish in any one year from Fishing Year (FY) 2012 to FY 2014; OR
- was observed on at least one groundfish trip in FY 2014.

#### 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.

DMF is currently working to notify eligible fishermen of their pre-qualification for Bin 3 direct aid. Once DMF has finished auditing federal catch and observer information, a mailing will be sent to all federal limited access multispecies permit holders with a MA homeport as of April 30, 2015. As with previous qualification processes, there will be a 10 day appeal period before qualifications are finalized. More details on the final Bin 3 spending plan can be found on the "[Groundfish Disaster Economic Assistance Program](#)" spotlight page.

Should you have any questions please contact Samantha Andrews, DMF Program Coordinator, by phone at 617.626.1564 or by email at [Samantha.n.andrews@state.ma.us](mailto:Samantha.n.andrews@state.ma.us).