

NORTHEAST SEAFOOD COALITION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NOAA FISHERIES MODIFIES HARBOR PORPOISE CONSEQUENCE CLOSURE

September 26, 2012—Plymouth, Mass. Today, NOAA Fisheries Northeast Regional Administrator announced a modified harbor porpoise consequence closure for the gillnet fleet. In early August, the Northeast Seafood Coalition submitted a request to NOAA Fisheries for a one-year adjustment to the closure, which was set to begin October 1 through November 30. The closure will now be in February and March, a time when there are fewer harbor porpoise interactions and less economic impact on fishing communities.

The NSC expresses its deep appreciation to Mr. John Bullard and his staff for conducting such an in-depth analysis and working with us to find a win-win solution that will advance the protection of harbor porpoise and help enable our fishery to survive during this very difficult time of a fishery disaster. We look forward to working with the agency and the Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Team, with whom we share a full commitment to harbor porpoise conservation.

To that end, NSC will be working closely with the gillnet fishermen, Northeast Fishery Sectors and the Gloucester Fishing Community Preservation Fund to follow-through on the industry's good-faith offer to double pinger deployment beginning October 1 and begin deploying the latest LED-pinger technology in November, which should eliminate any further concerns about compliance and problems with pinger functionality and testing.

We are grateful for the congressional support of U.S. Senators Kerry, Brown, Shaheen, Ayote, Snowe, and Collins; Congressmen Frank, Tierney, Keating, Guinta, Michaud; Congresswoman Pingree, state Senator Tarr and the Gloucester Fisheries Commission. Furthermore NSC is grateful for the statement released Friday by the Environmental Defense Fund, which expresses their support of the NSC proposal and its attempt to find a win-win solution for fishermen and harbor porpoise.

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Background Information:

The NMFS completed analyses of observed harbor porpoise bycatch from September 2010 through May 2011 and determined the bycatch rate for the Coastal Gulf of Maine Consequence Closure Area exceeded the target rate of 0.031 harbor porpoises per metric tons (equivalent to 1 harbor porpoise per 71,117 lbs.). As a result, waters from northern Massachusetts to Portland, Maine were scheduled to be closed to gillnetting in October and November beginning in fishing year 2012 to protect harbor porpoise. NSC submitted a congressionally supported proposal to modify the closure timing and area on August 9, 2012. On September 21, the NSC along with affected gillnet fishermen, Northeast Sector Service Network (NESSN), Northeast Fishery Sector Managers and representatives from various elected officials offices met with the NMFS Northeast Regional Administrator John Bullard and his staff regarding NSC's request. Following the meeting, Mr. Bullard committed to reconsider his decision based on all the new information presented to him in the meeting.

About the Northeast Seafood Coalition:

The Northeast Seafood Coalition is a non-profit organization representing over 250 commercial fishing entities, which hold over 500 limited access groundfish permits, in the northeast United States on political and policy issues affecting their interests as participants in the groundfish fishery and the Sector program in the Northeast

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multispecies groundfish fishery. NSC members are small, independent, entrepreneurial businesses that fish for—and support fishing for—cod, haddock, flounders, and other groundfish species along the northeast coast. NSC's fishing business members fish from small and large ports all along the northeast coast. They fish small, medium, and large vessels, and they employ all groundfish gear types.

NSC works for rules that embody real solutions to complex fishery problems.