

Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation

Project Title: “The Rhode Island Commercial Fishing Industry – Development of a Profile”

I. Project Synopsis:

One of the major topics that have emerged as research priorities, particularly in the state of Rhode Island, is the need to develop an up to date profile of the commercial fishing industry. The profile envisioned would include all fishing sectors (finfish, shellfish, and crustaceans), and would characterize the harvesting and processing capacity of the industry, support businesses, the people engaged in this livelihood, the coastal communities dependent on fishing, and the overall significance of the commercial fishing industry to local, state, and regional economies. Overall there is a need to better understand the harvesting, processing, and marketing capacity that currently exists, and how it relates to the existing and projected levels of resource availability. At the same time there is a growing need to define the relationship of commercial fishing to local, state, and regional economies, and to provide better information to those engaged in the planning and decision-making processes connected with economic development, potential buy out programs, marine spatial planning initiatives, infrastructure investments, and community planning, particularly waterfront development.

Focusing on the state of Rhode Island and its commercial fishing industry, the proposed project intends to serve as a pilot study to uncover a basic methodology for using information to characterize the industry (economically, socially, and in relation to the resources it is dependent on) that could, in turn, be applied to other states in the northeast region to develop a broader regional commercial fishing industry profile. The primary goal of the project is to develop, in a timely manner, an industry profile of the Rhode Island commercial fishing industry that can be used by members of the commercial fishing industry; federal, state, and regional resource managers; elected officials; policy advisors at the state and federal levels of government; community and economic development planners; and interested others.

This pilot project will be organized into six key phases: 1) Defining the content of the industry profile and establishing a scope of work to be carried out; 2) Issuance of a directed Request for Applications for researchers to respond to; 3) Choosing a team of researchers to conduct the research; 4) Compilation and synthesis of information including data from federal, state, and regional agency databases, and from previous and any new social and economic surveys; and identification of major information gaps; 5) Development of a set of written documents summarizing the initial project findings; and 6) Education/outreach activities to share findings of project research with stakeholders and general audience.

The Project Steering Committee will oversee and direct the project, and be supported by CFRF staff. It will be comprised of representatives of the commercial fishing industry, RI’s General Assembly, state fishery managers at RI DEM, NMFS, the RI Economic Development Corporation, and CFRF Board members. The CFRF will serve in an administrative capacity for the overall project, with the selected Project Research Team acting as a sub-award recipient. All final decisions regarding the choice of a Project Research Team, project budget and scope of work, and work products and deadlines will reside

with the Board of Directors of the CFRF. The projected timeline for the project encompasses one year beginning in October 2010.

The project specifically targets NOAA's goal to "protect, restore, and manage the use of coastal and ocean resources through an ecosystem approach to management"¹. By utilizing existing social and economic data to develop an up to date industry profile of the commercial fishing industry, and comparing the existing harvesting and processing capacity with resource availability, the project represents a first step in beginning to quantify the relationship between these two factors, and move towards a sustainable method of managing fisheries.

¹ US Dept. of Commerce, NOAA. April 2005. "New Priorities for the 21st Century – NOAA's Strategic Plan – Updated for FY 2006-FY2011, page 2. Also FY 2010-F 2011BAA Announcement, page 2.
