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GLOUCESTER FISHING COMMUNITY PRESERVATION FUNDS PAVES THE WAY FOR NEW TECHNOLOGY PINGERS AND PROTECTING HARBOR PORPOISE

November 12, 2013—Gloucester, Mass. Under the leadership and financial commitment of the Gloucester Fishing Community Preservation Fund (GFCPF), a Gloucester based non-profit organization, the gillnet groundfish industry in the Northeast region is replacing current technology harbor porpoise pingers, with new LED Future Oceans porpoise pingers.

Pingers are acoustic alarm devices that emit a frequency proven to deter marine mammals from swimming into gillnets. This new LED technology has the potential to solve a major problem in pinger functionality testing and compliance rates as the LED technology enables fishermen and regulatory authorities who test pinger functionality to easily confirm if the devices are operating correctly simply by observing if the pingers are “blinking”.

Currently, the industry is heavily invested in existing pinger equipment. With so many financial and management stresses presently incurred by fishermen in the region, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to expect the industry to be able to support conversion to LED pingers and strand their current investment in pingers.

In direct response to these realities, the GFCPF acquired 4,800 of the new LED pingers at a total cost of over \$330,000 and has recently implemented an all-out effort to swap out existing pingers with the new technology. The GFCPF has contracted with non-profit sector entities in the region that have gillnet fishermen enrolled to allow them to exchange existing pingers for new LED pingers for a nominal co-pay of just \$15.00 which is just a fraction of the \$75-\$80 value. The exchanged pingers will be placed into a recycling program which allows up to 90% of the old pinger components to be recycled.

This swap out program has benefited from over \$100,000 through financial partnerships with the Gear Conservation Engineering and Demonstration Network (GEARNET) and the New Hampshire Coastal Economic Development Corporation (CEDC) and Regional Economic Development Center of Southern New Hampshire (REDC).