



We've Changed Our Name to Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office

NOAA Fisheries has changed the name of the Northeast Regional Office to the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO). We're doing this at the direction of Congress to better reflect the broad extent of our region, which spans from Maine to North Carolina and includes the Great Lakes. This change is in line with recent efforts to expand our presence in the Mid-Atlantic region.

We have started to use our new name in various communications. For instance, you'll see our new name on the home page of our regional office website, in e-mails, and on our letterhead. When

you call our office or one of our staff gives a talk, you'll hear the new name.

Seafood dealers and fishermen also will see news about the name change when they log into various NOAA Fisheries catch and fish sales reporting systems such as SIMMs or Fish-Online.

Our goal is to make this transition as seamless as possible for constituents, but it will take awhile to modify all of our operating systems, forms, and procedures to reflect the new name. However, over time, you will see Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office or the Greater Atlantic Region or GARFO used

on all of our web pages and in print and electronic communications materials, regulatory actions, and legal documents.

While we don't expect there to be much of an impact on our constituents as we make this transition, we realize that it will take time for our stakeholders to get used to seeing this new name and using it themselves.

As always, please feel free to contact our offices if you have questions about this news or other matters. You can reach us at (978) 281-9300 or visit us online at <www.nero.noaa.gov>.

Revised Redfish Sector Exemption Proposed for 2014

NOAA Fisheries is proposing to approve 19 groundfish sector operations plans for the 2014 fishing year. If all are approved, sectors will be allocated about 99% of the 2014 groundfish quotas based on the landings histories of the approximately 850 permits enrolled in sectors.

Sectors are given universal exemptions from groundfish regulations, such as most groundfish trip limits, some Gulf of Maine Rolling Closure Areas

restrictions, and a few others.

However, in its annual operations plan, a sector can request additional exemptions and must provide justification for its request. In addition to the universal exemptions and 18 annual exemptions that were approved in 2013, we have proposed a few new exemptions for 2014, including one that allows vessels to use smaller mesh to target redfish.

Since 2012, we have approved different versions

of an exemption that enables sector vessels to target redfish using mesh smaller than the minimum groundfish mesh size of 6.5".

Originally, we allowed the use of mesh sizes 6" and greater, and then, later in the year, of 4.5" and greater.

However, due to concerns about the catch of sublegal groundfish and bycatch of other species, we required monitoring on 100% of these trips. In 2012, we funded the monitoring. Beginning in 2013, we required industry to fund the monitoring on these trips.

For the 2014 fishing year, we have proposed

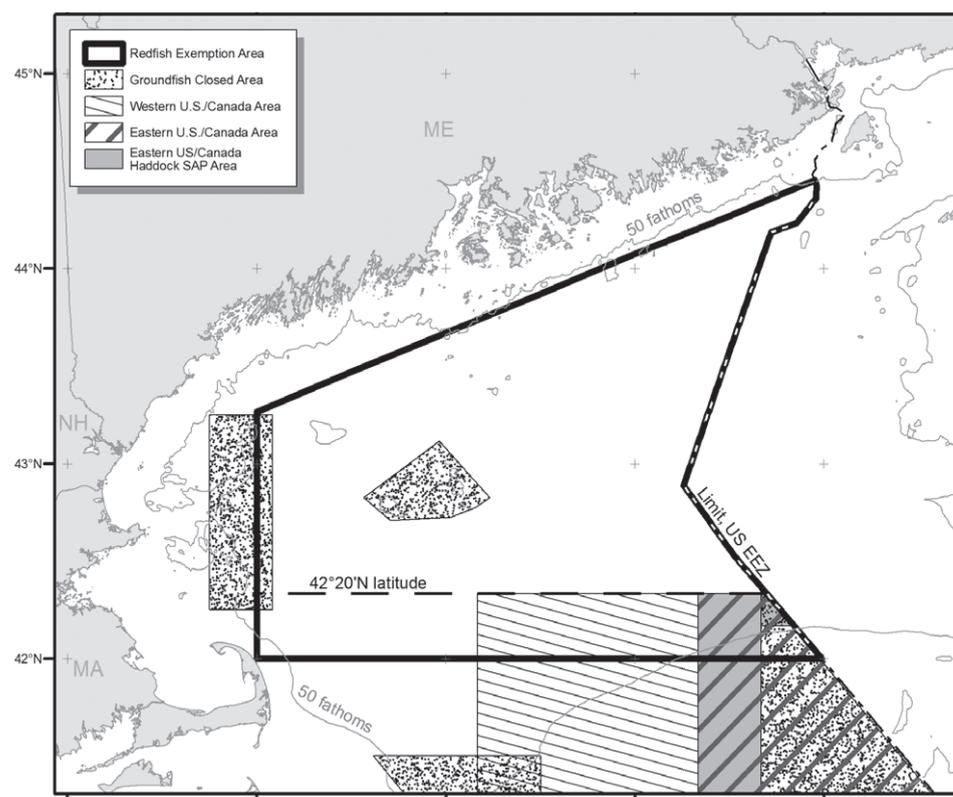
GARFO now offers text alert option

You can now choose to receive texts from NOAA Fisheries' Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO) on your cell phone. Alerts will include information about emergency actions, area openings and closings, and possession limit adjustments.

To ensure that you don't receive too many texts, we are limiting them to only time-sensitive notifications. We expect that typically you will receive about 10-12 texts per year, and you may not receive one for some time.

If you would like to receive text messages from GARFO, visit our website at <www.nero.noaa.gov/fish> and complete the simple form. The information you submit will be anonymous, and no other information will be recorded.

If you have any questions, would like to change your cell number, or stop getting text alerts, please text back or send an e-mail to <nmfs.gar.feedback@noaa.gov>. You also may contact Olivia Rugo, stakeholder engagement, GARFO, by phone at (978) 675-2167 or by e-mail at <olivia.rugo@noaa.gov>.



a redfish exemption that would allow vessels to use a 6" mesh codend (vs. 4.5" mesh) in a modified exemption area (see chart).

This revised area includes additional deep water and adds a northern boundary to protect juvenile groundfish in shallower water. In addition, vessels would be subject to the standard groundfish target monitoring coverage level -- 26% in 2014 -- rather than be required to carry an observer on every trip.

We proposed relaxing the monitoring requirement

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Cooperative Research: 2010-2014 and Beyond

In 2009, after a decade of cooperative research, we at NOAA Fisheries' Northeast Cooperative Research Program (NCRP) decided to revisit the direction of our program in preparation for 2010 through 2014.

We sought input on our strategic plan from the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC), Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office (GARFO -- formerly Northeast Regional Office), and stakeholders.

These discussions highlighted the need for more coordination across institutions and agency divisions, more direct NEFSC involvement in cooperative research, and more flexible methods to work with partners.

Two major goals for cooperative research emerged from this process: developing innovative monitoring tools and pilot programs to address data gaps; and the

formation of a conservation engineering program to improve regional coordination and technology transfer to industry. The NCRP supported these efforts with 2009 and 2010 sector funding.

Addressing data gaps

Under the addressing data gaps goal, the first priority called for increased use of real-time reporting tools by fishermen. The NCRP responded by expanding the Study Fleet program using the Fisheries Logbook and Data Recording System (FLDRS).

This system expanded tow-by-tow recording so that captains' reported discards could be compared with those of NEFSC observers and at-sea monitors.

The Study Fleet also has given us an ideal opportunity to collect biological samples and assist with the development of a new, affordable wireless temperature-depth probe used to gather information about bottom temperatures and fish distribution.

Additionally, with funds from the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission to expand electronic reporting, the NCRP is equipping over 100 vessels in Southern New England and Mid-Atlantic fisheries with FLDRS software. All of these vessels will report catch electronically, and many will collect detailed tow-by-tow data with associated GPS locations and bottom temperatures that will allow a much greater range of scientific analyses.

Several pilot industry-based surveys (IBS) to help fill data gaps also were supported. They are as follows.

- Existing fixed-gear surveys for scup and black sea bass were reviewed, with follow-up efforts focused on a dedicated black sea bass survey to fill data gaps.
- A 2013 pilot Georges Bank flatfish IBS also was implemented through the NEFSC. Conducted by two commercial vessels, this survey used a net similar to the 2003-2005 Southern New England yellowtail flounder

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Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Annual Management Area Seasonal Requirements

The Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Plan was implemented to reduce bycatch of harbor porpoise in gillnet fisheries from Maine to the North Carolina/South Carolina border.

Management measures under the plan include pinger requirements, seasonal closure areas, and consequence closure areas. The following table lists upcoming dates for Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Plan management area restrictions that gillnet fishermen need to know.

Details on gear modifications, pinger specifications, and management area maps are available on the plan website at <www.nero.noaa.gov/hptrp>.

For More Information on the Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Plan or on Pingers Contact:

NMFS Fishery Liaisons

John Higgins - (207) 677-2316 (New England)
Glenn Salvador - (757) 414-0128 (Mid Atlantic)
David Hilton - (252) 921-0142 (Southeast)

NOAA Fisheries Plan Coordinator

Kate Swails - (978) 282-8481,
<kate.swails@noaa.gov>

HARBOR PORPOISE TAKE REDUCTION PLAN		
Northeast Gillnet Fisheries (All)		
Management Area	Dates	Closure or Gear Modifications
Northeast Closure Area	Aug. 15 - Sept. 13	CLOSED to ALL gillnet fishing
Mid-Coast Management Area	Sept. 15 - May 31	Pingers Required
Massachusetts Bay Management Area	Nov. 1 - Feb. 28/29	Pingers Required
	March 1-31	CLOSED to ALL gillnet fishing
	April 1 - May 31	Pingers Required
Stellwagen Bank Management Area	Nov. 1 - May 31	Pingers Required
Southern New England Management Area	Dec. 1 - May 31	Pingers Required
Cape Cod South Closure Area	March 1-31	CLOSED to ALL gillnet fishing
Offshore Management Area	Nov. 1 - May 31	Pingers Required
Cashes Ledge Closure Area	February 1-28/29	CLOSED to ALL gillnet fishing
Mid- Atlantic Gillnet Fisheries (Large and Small Mesh Requirements)		
Management Area	Dates Gear Modifications Required	Dates of Gillnet Closure
Large Mesh Gillnet (Mesh Size 7-18 inches)		
Mudhole North Management Area	Jan. 1 - Feb.14; March 16-31; April 21-30	Feb. 15 - March 15; April 1-20
Mudhole South Management Area	Jan. 1-31; March 16-31; April 21-30	Feb. 1 - March 15; April 1-20
Southern Mid-Atlantic Management Area	Feb. 1-14; March 16 - April 30	Feb. 15 - March 15
Waters off New Jersey Management Area	Jan. 1 - Mar 31; April 21-30	April 1-20
Small Mesh Gillnet (Mesh Size >5 inches to < 7 inches)		
Waters off New Jersey Management Area	Jan. 1 - April 30	-
Mudhole North Management Area	Jan. 1 - Feb 14; March 16 - April 30	Feb. 15 - March 15
Mudhole South Management Area	Jan. 1 - 31; March 16 - April 30	Feb. 1 - March 15
Southern Mid-Atlantic Management Area	Feb. 1 - April 30	-

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IBS but modified to ensure the catch of smaller, younger flatfish. Additional work will compare the catch of flatfish with commercial gear and gear from the NEFSC survey vessel, the Henry B. Bigelow. And

- A two-year spiny dogfish tagging program was put into action, with almost 35,000 dogfish tagged to help answer questions about their movements, stock structure, age, and growth.

Upcoming activities in 2014 include a pilot longline IBS in the western and central Gulf of Maine. Two commercial vessels will sample 40-45 primarily hard-bottom stations during the spring and fall, with sampling coverage in selected zones similar to the coverage of the NEFSC bottom trawl survey. This survey will provide sampling in hard bottom areas and work on age, growth, and maturity for data-poor species such as cusk, Atlantic halibut, thorny skate, and wolffish.

Conservation engineering

Implementing the second goal involved developing a regionally network-based conservation engineering program that increased and supported more flexible and timely coordination between industry and scientific partners. Several collaborative groups were formed to work on specific issues facing the industry.

The Gear Conservation Engineering and Demonstration Network (GEARNET) focused on developing pilot projects for more selective and efficient gear suggested by industry.

Projects have included: an LED pinger exchange program to help gillnetters comply with harbor porpoise regulations; a flume tank workshop; and testing gear such as topless and separator trawls, self-closing codends, methods to reduce fuel consumption, and semi-pelagic trawl doors. Currently, this group is working on outreach and extension services to encourage adoption of these modified gears.

The REDNET group was formed to help develop a sustainable Gulf of Maine redfish fishery on the rebuilt stock. This project has conducted: marketing studies; exploratory fishing to show prospects for a clean fishery; and testing of various mesh sizes to determine catch selectivity. Next steps include development of methods to allow small fish to escape at depth to maximize survival, outreach to the redfish industry, and exploration of processing capabilities.

The Squid Trawl Network (STN) was developed

ATTENTION ALL TRAP/ POT FISHERMEN

Regardless of the permit you hold, if you set trap/pot gear targeting any species, you may be expected to comply with marine mammal gear restrictions and regulations as determined by the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan in your area, even if your fishery is not currently managed under a fishery management plan.

For more information, please visit the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction website at <www.nero.noaa.gov/whaletrp> or call the NOAA Fisheries fishery liaison for your area: John Higgins (New England), (207) 677-2316; Glenn Salvador (Mid-Atlantic), (757) 414-0128; or David Hilton (Southeast), (252) 921-0142.

May Workshop to Shape the Future of Electronic Monitoring in the Northeast

Recognizing that the need for timely, accurate commercial catch and discard information is growing, several groups in the region are joining forces to explore how we can use technology to help collect these data. Fishermen, fishery managers, scientists, conservationists, and other stakeholders will come together May 7-8 for a workshop to develop a shared vision and strategy for implementing electronic monitoring in Northeast fisheries.

Electronic monitoring uses onboard computers and video cameras to document catch. It's been used successfully in fisheries outside of the US and, in a more limited capacity, to monitor compliance in US fisheries in the North Pacific.

NOAA Fisheries is in the process of developing a regional electronic technology implementation plan, which will consider and prepare for modernizing fishery-dependent data collection systems. Exploring how electronic monitoring may be used to meet some of these critical data needs is an important part of that effort. We at NOAA Fisheries want to hear from our partners and stakeholders during this workshop about how electronic monitoring can be a part of this modernization.

A lot of effort already has gone into evaluating electronic monitoring technology. It has been pilot tested in several US fisheries, including the groundfish fishery in New England.

Fishermen's participation was a key

component of these projects as they helped troubleshoot and refine shipboard components of the system. The Northeast Fisheries Science Center is finalizing a series of reports evaluating its electronic monitoring pilot project, which tested two monitoring approaches on groundfish vessels in 2013.

The first approach used video data to validate discards reported on the vessel trip report, which then served as the record for the trip. The second approach sought to monitor compliance with a maximized retention protocol. Under this model, catch accounting mostly would occur at the dock.

Despite ongoing pilot studies, electronic monitoring has yet to be approved for broad use in day-to-day fishing operations. Interest remains high among some stakeholders to see electronic monitoring adopted not only in the groundfish fishery but also other fisheries in the region, including Atlantic herring and sea scallops.

Workshop details

The next step is to figure out how to actually use this technology as part of a comprehensive monitoring system. Many key questions remain to be answered about program design, data analysis, and data management.

A goal of the May workshop will be to develop specific recommendations for the New England Fishery Management Council and NOAA Fisheries.

See ELECTRONIC MONITORING, page 4

to tackle gear-related issues around butterfish bycatch in the long-finned squid fishery. Initial consideration of prior gear modifications supported the conclusion that additional gear work was not warranted. Rather, industry members advised the group to shift its focus towards research to improve the butterfish stock

assessment, which they believed would eliminate or re-adjust the size of the butterfish bycatch cap in the squid fishery.

Now, the STN is developing a project to test the use of acoustic survey equipment to determine how well the type of net used on NEFSC stock assessment cruises catches butterfish. The STN developed outreach avenues to help keep the squid industry up-to-date on important issues and also supports an industry initiative to share information on river herring and scup hot spots that can be avoided to reduce bycatch.

In addition, another collaborative group is bringing advanced oceanographic and habitat information into analytical models to help predict the abundance and distribution of long-finned squid and butterfish in the Mid-Atlantic Bight. The resulting predictions could help minimize butterfish bycatch, reducing the risk that excessive bycatch may shut down the profitable squid fishery.

Additional investigations include a diet analysis of long-finned squid to better understand their role as predators. This project plans to combine the results of habitat modeling, diet analysis, and gear modifications to examine the impacts of different strategies to reduce butterfish

bycatch and sustainably harvest short-lived squid.

Through this project, the NCRP has developed closer ties with modelers from the Mid-Atlantic Regional Ocean Observation System and is supplying critical bottom temperature data collected through the Study Fleet to improve ocean temperature models. This information can help fishermen make strategic fishing decisions that affect the selectivity of their catch.

As 2014 progresses and many of these projects wrap up, we at the NCRP will be seeking input again as we update our strategic plan and determine program directions for the next few years.

For more information on any of these projects or the NCRP, e-mail John Hoey at <John.Hoey@noaa.gov>.

Redfish

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because there are fewer concerns about the catch of sublegal groundfish and bycatch of other species due to the modified area and the larger minimum mesh size. The exemption also is being proposed in a way that doesn't require us to monitor every single haul on a trip.

The proposed changes to the redfish exemption are the result of conversations with the fishing industry and cooperative research findings and are designed to make the exemption more attractive to sector vessels financially and operationally while addressing the agency's bycatch concerns.

For more information, call Brett Alger, Sustainable Fisheries Division, at (978) 281-9153 or e-mail him at <brett.alger@noaa.gov>.

NOAA Fisheries' OLE Adds New Officers

With responsibilities for resource protection in more than 3 million square miles of open ocean, more than 85,000 miles of US coastline, 13 National Marine Sanctuaries, and Marine National Monuments, NOAA Fisheries' Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) relies heavily on its staff in the field.

OLE's sworn personnel include enforcement officers and special agents. Enforcement officers focus on improving compliance through monitoring, patrols, and inspections. Special agents conduct complex civil and criminal investigations.

During the last two years, OLE has hired six uniformed enforcement officers in the Northeast region to expand its monitoring, patrol, inspection, and compliance assistance activities. Enforcement officers increase NOAA Fisheries' dockside presence, provide information about regulations and compliance to members of the fishing industry on a regular basis, and participate in at-sea enforcement actions with the US Coast Guard and state partners.

OLE's Northeast Division expects to introduce two additional enforcement officers in 2014 as well as a Supervisory Enforcement Officer. This shift in staffing is intended to foster greater outreach efforts and increase the visibility of OLE's programs, emphasizing prevention of violations through education as a means to improve compliance.

"It is clear that the vast majority of fishermen and seafood dealers are honest, hardworking individuals who want to follow fishery regulations designed to rebuild and sustain healthy fish stocks," said Logan Gregory, OLE's Special Agent in Charge. "A greater dockside presence with staff ready to help fishermen improve compliance is an important step in building a stronger relationship with industry."

Officer profile

Timothy Wilmarth was hired by OLE in June 2011 as part of this effort to increase the number of uniformed enforcement officers in the Northeast. Tim grew up in Rhode Island and Massachusetts and has always enjoyed being on or near the ocean.

During his time at the University of Maine, he realized his interest was in law enforcement, and he began his federal law enforcement career with the US Border Patrol on the US/Mexico border. Tim also served in the Coast Guard Reserve and National Park Service before transferring to NOAA Fisheries.

"This position was the perfect fit for me," he said. "A job that combines my love of working in the marine environment with my law enforcement experience to help protect our nation's living marine resources is very rewarding. This is a worthy endeavor in my opinion."

Tim's area of responsibility includes the South Shore of Massachusetts, Cape Cod, and the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, where he assists with natural and historical resource protection.

As one of six new officers hired in the Northeast Division, Tim is responsible for forging a path for OLE's uniformed enforcement officers at a very challenging time for industry, as many are struggling with the decline in the groundfish fishery within his area of responsibility. Despite these challenges, Tim emphasized that his work with fishermen and seafood dealers is one of the most rewarding aspects of the job. "Although one of the challenges has been breaking



down barriers, it's very rewarding to build working relationships among members of the industry," he said. "Those barriers can be tough to get past at times. By the same token, the majority of the people I interact with generally appreciate that I have a job to do, and they understand law enforcement is essential to maintaining a level playing field."

A typical week for Tim involves conducting patrols and routine inspections of fishing vessels

and seafood dealers. While part of his job involves following up on complaints, attending outreach events, conducting surveillance, and working closely with State counterparts and the Coast Guard, Tim said he recognizes that the most important aspect of his job is talking with fishermen.

It's not easy to navigate through the regulations these days, and many people are struggling through hard times. Tim said his main commitment is to building stronger relationships with industry so that he can be the type of officer who is easily approached and adds value to the industry.

"I feel that communication is key," he said. "Meeting with industry face to face is invaluable. Sometimes compliance can be accomplished through education and following up on questions and issues to prevent violations."

Tim's hard work and professionalism is representative of the dedication of the entire enforcement program, according to Logan Gregory.

"Our six enforcement officers not only provide enforcement presence, but provide a service to the industry and the communities they work in," he said. "These officers have very large areas of responsibility, which is challenging. They work in multiple communities where there are differences in dynamics and views, and they do a great job of ensuring that they provide fair and effective law enforcement and compliance assistance."

If you have any questions, call Tim Wilmarth at (508) 992-7711 or e-mail him at <timothy.wilmarth@noaa.gov>.

Electronic monitoring

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Successful implementation of electronic monitoring will depend on the regulations and infrastructure built to support the technology.

Government agencies, fishery management councils, conservation organizations, and the fishing industry came together for a national workshop in January in Seattle, WA to discuss taking electronic monitoring from pilot studies to operational programs in US fisheries. The workshop identified ingredients for success and key considerations for implementing electronic monitoring in various regions across the country.

The May 7-8 Northeast Electronic Monitoring Workshop is a follow-up to that meeting. Hosted by The Nature Conservancy and NOAA Fisheries, this workshop will build on the momentum from the national workshop to identify clear goals for utilizing electronic monitoring to improve data collection and monitoring.

NOAA Fisheries sees the May workshop as an opportunity to bring everyone to the table at the beginning of the implementation planning process.

"We see a lot of potential in the broader application of electronic monitoring," said John Bullard, regional administrator of NOAA Fisheries' Greater Atlantic Region. "But in order to make widespread use of electronic monitoring a reality, we need to work together to set goals, troubleshoot potential challenges, and identify workable solutions for its use in our regional fisheries."

Added Geoffrey Smith, director of The Nature Conservancy's Marine Program in Maine, "We are

excited to help bring together stakeholders to discuss the key implementation challenges and identify tangible solutions for advancing the use of electronic monitoring in New England fisheries."

For more information regarding electronic monitoring, visit our website at <www.nefsc.noaa.gov/fsb/ems>. To register for the upcoming Northeast Electronic Monitoring Workshop, visit <http://bit.ly/MIIyO7>. If you have any questions, please call Melissa Hooper, Sustainable Fisheries Division, at (978) 281-9166 or e-mail her at <Melissa.Hooper@noaa.gov>.

NOAA Fisheries' Greater Atlantic Region and The Nature Conservancy, with support from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, are partnering with the New England Fishery Management Council, the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, and members of the fishing industry to host a workshop on electronic monitoring.

Northeast Electronic Monitoring Workshop

May 7-8, 2014

Sheraton Portsmouth Harborside Hotel
Portsmouth, NH

There is no charge for attending the workshop but space is limited, so please register soon. Registration information is available online at <http://bit.ly/MIIyO7>.



The NOAA FISHERIES NAVIGATOR