The NOAA FISHERIES NAVIGATOR

You Can Now Apply for and Renew Your Fishing Permits Online

To make it easier and faster for you to apply for and renew your regional federal fishing permits, we are offering some new online services. Currently, you can **apply** online for:

- Initial Vessel Permit
- Vessel Operator Permit
- Letter of Authorization
- Gillnet Tag and Annual Certification
- Initial Dealer Permit
- Letter of Acknowledgement
- Temporary Possession Permit
- Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP)
- Exempted Educational Activity Authorization (EEAA)
- Scallop Research Set-Aside Letter of Authorization (RSA LOA)
- Scientific Research Permit (SRP)

Starting January 2, 2020, you will also be able to **renew** all of your valid federal fishing permits online.

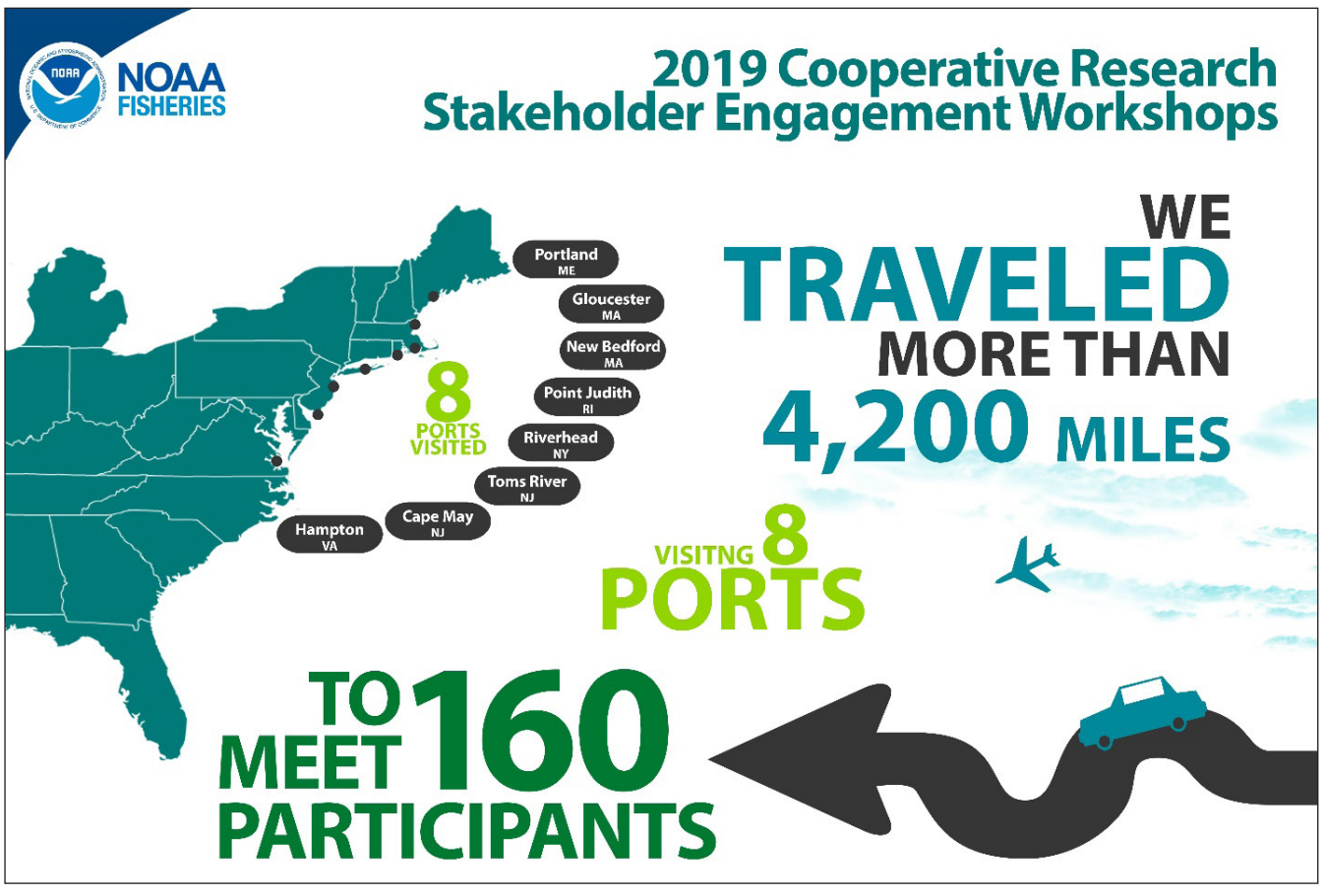
To apply for or renew a permit, **you must have a Fish Online account**. Fish Online is our password-protected website for vessel owners and operators. If you need to create an account, go to www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/apps/login. For assistance with Fish Online, call our Help Desk at 978-281-9188.

You will also need to have your **valid Coast Guard documentation or state registration** available to enter this information into the online system. If you use our online system to renew your permits, you will not have to provide paper copies of these documents.

To access our online permitting system, log in to your Fish Online account and click on "Application Forms" in the left margin. Submissions via mail and fax will remain options, but we recommend that you take advantage of the speed and ease of renewing your permits online.

If you need assistance with permits, call our Permits Office at 978-282-8438 or email NMFS.GAR.Permits@noaa.gov

Thank You! NEFSC Cooperative Research Branch Wraps Stakeholder Engagement Workshops



The NEFSC Cooperative Research Branch concluded the 2019 Stakeholder Engagement Workshops in October. The effort, which involved over 160 commercial and recreational fishermen, fishing business representatives, academic and non-profit researchers, and other stakeholders, was intended to collect input on the successes, challenges, and priorities for cooperative research in the region.

The NEFSC Cooperative Research Branch would like to thank all of the individuals who contributed to this effort for sharing insights and recommendations. We are currently developing a report that highlights the main themes and actionable next steps. For more information, contact Giovanni Gianesin, Cooperative Research Branch, at giovanni.gianesin@noaa.gov.

THIS SUPPLEMENT PROVIDED BY NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE'S GREATER ATLANTIC REGIONAL OFFICE

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The NOAA FISHERIES NAVIGATOR

One Stop for Commercial Fishing Information

On our new web site, you can find much of the information you need to go fishing in one place. On the newly created Fishing Industry Resources web page, you will find what you need to participate in our regional federally managed fisheries.

The web address is https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/resources-fishing/resources-fishing-greater-atlantic-region so be sure to bookmark it. If you want to find it on our website, click the Regions tab in the menu along the top of the page and select New England/ Mid-Atlantic. On the right side of this page in a blue box you will see the link for the Fishing Industry Resources page.

Here, you will find information on:

- Links to each managed species for regulatory information
- Fish Online
- Vessel and Dealer Permits
- Permit Information by Species
- Forms and Applications
- Dealer Reporting
- Dealer Reporting Requirements
- Vessel Trip Reporting
- Quota Monitoring and Landings Reports
- Discard Methodology
- NOAA Navigator (2012-Present)
- Signing up for email and texts alerts
- An overview of the fishery management process and how you can get involved

Please let us know if you have ideas about what other information or helpful links should be added to this page. You can contact Allison Ferreira, Regional Office, at 978-281-9103 or email her at Allison.Ferreira@noaa.gov

Have a Question? Our Field Staff Have the Answer

This winter, visit our Port Agents and other field staff at numerous boat shows and fishing expos from Maine to Virginia to get answers to your questions about commercial and recreational fishing. Stop by our booth for information on a variety of topics, including fishing regulations, electronic vessel trip reporting, online permitting, protected species, and stock assessments.

If you are curious about how to submit your vessel trip reports electronically, come to one of the shows listed below and our staff can walk you through the steps. Or maybe you have questions about how to apply for or renew a permit online – our Port Agents can help with that too.

Typically, lobstermen who attend the Massachusetts Lobstermen Association's Annual Weekend in Hyannis, MA have questions about protected species and gear interactions. Our staff can provide this information, so make sure to come by.

You can also visit your local port agent anytime for assistance. On the web, search for "NOAA Fisheries Port Agent" to find your nearest agent.

For up-to-date information on what shows we will be at, follow us on Facebook @NOAAFisheriesNEMA or Twitter @NOAAFish_GARFO.

Date	Show	Location
Jan 17-19	East Coast Commercial Fishermen's and Aquaculture Trade Show	Ocean City, MD
Jan 24-26	New England Fishing Expo	Boxborough, MA
Feb 7-9	Annual Mid-Atlantic Boat Show	Virginia Beach, VA
Feb 8-16	New England Boat Show	Boston, MA
Feb 13-16	New Jersey Boat Sale & Expo / Marine Trades Show	Edison, NJ
Feb 15-16	New York Sport Fishing Federation Forum & Auction	Freeport, NY
March 5-7	Maine Fishermen's Forum	Rockport, ME
March 13-15	Saltwater Fishing Expo	Edison, NJ
March 14-15	Massachusetts Striped Bass Association Meeting	Pembroke, MA
March 27-29	New England Saltwater Fishing Show	Providence, RI
April 16-19	Massachusetts Lobstermens' Annual Trade Show	Hyannis, MA

Net Spread Study Targets Flatfish, Reveals Subtle Differences

The focus of the 2019 twin-trawling experiment was to test different net spreads and to look for differences in capturing fish at different water depths that could be attributed to that spread.

In a twin-trawl study, the boat tows two trawl nets as closely together as possible through the same body of fish at the same time. In this study, one net was fished at a constant spread of 13 meters while the other tested various net spreads.

Both nets were the same as that used on the twice-yearly bottom-trawl survey conducted on the NOAA Ship *Henry B. Bigelow*. The nets also had the same rockhopper sweep used in the federal survey.

Fishermen and researchers wanted to know more about *Bigelow* net underspread (being open less widely than desired) in shallower water, as well as a net overspread (or being open more widely than desired) in deeper water.

Four flatfish were the main targets for study: Gulf of Maine witch flounder and American plaice found in deeper waters, and Southern New England winter flounder and windowpane flounder found in shallower waters.

The study was done aboard the 78-foot western-rigged stern trawler *Karen Elizabeth* out of Point Judith, Rhode Island. The team included vessel captain Chris Roebuck and his four-person crew, staff from the Northeast Fisheries Science Center's Cooperative Research and Ecosystem Surveys Branches, and staff from the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management. The vessel made two trips, the first September 12-19 and the second September 23-28.

NOAA photos

Each tow followed many of the same protocols used for the spring and fall bottom-trawl surveys on the NOAA Ship *Henry Bigelow*: 20-minute towing time, constant towing speed between 2.8 and 3.2 knots, constant gear contact with the sea bottom, and using net performance evaluation instruments to ensure the gear was operating as intended.

During the sweep efficiency study conducted in 2017, difference in catches were visibly significant between a chain sweep and the Bigelow's rockhopper sweep. This net-spread study revealed much more subtle differences.

"We did 170 tows in 14 days, and collected a lot of data," said Chris Roebuck, who is both the captain and owner of the *Karen Elizabeth*. "We were looking for a very subtle difference. Based on the preliminary data, the good news is that the catch rates generally aligned with the net spreads. It was a good experiment, and we got to the bottom of the issue."

Roebuck hopes fishery stock assessments will use more data from studies like this one. "The assessments are a complicated process, and hard for some in the industry to understand, especially since the nets move far more slowly than the reality of fishing. In the end, we all want the same thing: catch advice that matches what we see in the water."

Russell Brown agrees with Roebuck. Brown is in charge of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center's stock assessment effort.

"Cooperative research on bottom-trawl survey gear

See NET STUDY, page 4

$1.1 Million Awarded to Seven New England/Mid-Atlantic Bycatch Reduction Projects

NOAA Fisheries awarded more than $2.3 million to 16 projects throughout our country to support innovative bycatch reduction research projects through its Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program. We are pleased to announce that seven of the awards are for projects in our region, and total about half of the overall funding.

These awards support key partners in the research and development of innovative approaches and strategies for reducing bycatch, bycatch mortality, and post-release mortality in our nation's fisheries.

2019 Projects in the New England/ Mid-Atlantic Region:

University of Missouri - $195,000

- Project: Quantifying and reducing post-release mortality of shortfin mako sharks captured as bycatch in the Atlantic coast pelagic long-line fisheries.

Gulf of Maine Research Institute - $127,329

- Project: Improving the selectivity of the ultra-low opening trawl to reduce bycatch of Atlantic cod.

Maine Department of Marine Resources - $198,018

- Project: Assessing the feasibility of Time Tension Line Cutter use in fixed gear fisheries to reduce entanglement risk for the endangered North Atlantic right whale.

Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries - $176,572

- Project: Bycatch reduction of red hake in the Southern New England silver hake trawl fishery.

Cornell University - $75,169

- Project: Advancing bycatch reduction technology in New England small mesh multispecies fisheries-outreach and technology transfer of the large mesh belly panel.

Sea Mammal Education Learning Technology Society - $225,000

- Project: Developing and testing innovative ropeless lobster fishing gear to reduce bycatch of North Atlantic right whales.

New England Aquarium - $125,000

- Project: Whale release ropes as a large whale bycatch mitigation option in the lobster fishery.

If you have questions, contact Ryan Silva, Regional Office, at Ryan.Silva@noaa.gov or 978-281-9326.

The NOAA FISHERIES NAVIGATOR

Commercial Fisherman Uses Electronic Reporting Devices to Provide Real Time Data

For 200 days of each of the past 44 years, Tony Borges has been setting out from New Bedford, Massachusetts, in search of groundfish, fluke, and squid. That's roughly 8,800 days for those of you keeping score at home. He started fishing with his father, though Borges says his father tried to dissuade him from being a fisherman. He encouraged Borges to join the U.S. Coast Guard instead.

Nevertheless, in 1977, along with his cousin, aunt, and father, he purchased the brand new FV Sao Paulo. He still owns and operates it today.

I am a GARFO Port Agent in New Bedford, and when I met Borges early one morning onboard the Sao Paulo, he was down in the engine room covered in grease working on his vessel's first complete overhaul in 40 years. We went to the wheelhouse to talk.

Study Fleet

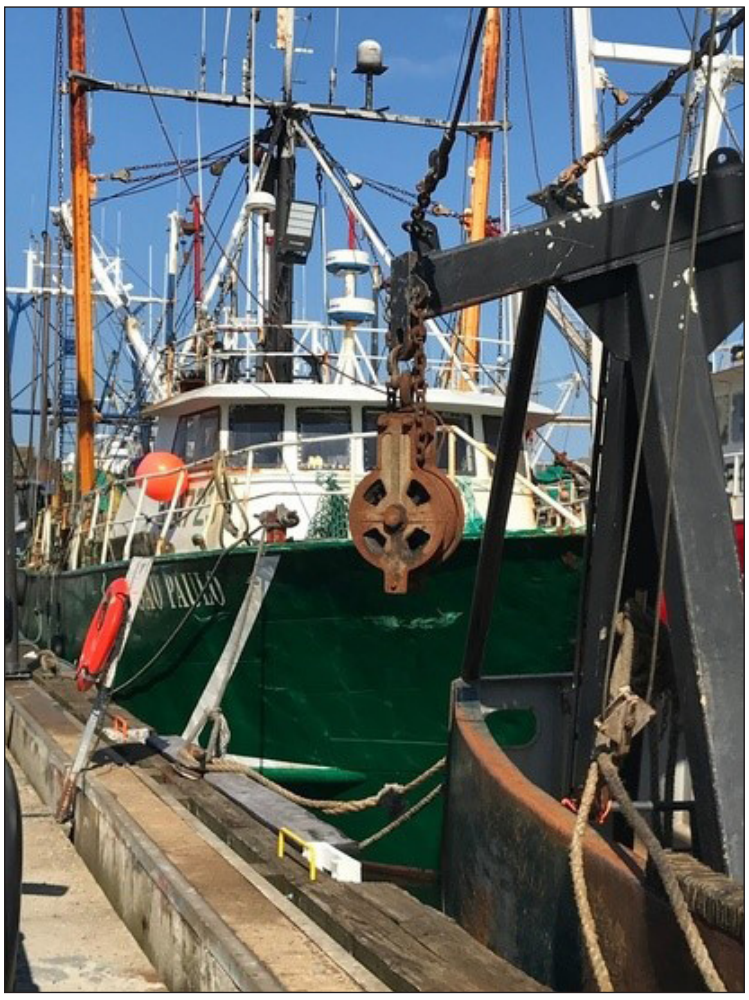
For the last seven years, Borges has been participating in the Northeast Fisheries Science Center's Study Fleet. As part of this scientific data collection program, he records haul-by-haul catch (kept and discarded) information for all species using a software program called Fisheries Logbook Data Recording Software (FLDRS). He also attached a temperature probe on one of his trawl doors to collect bottom water temperatures while fishing.

Study Fleet vessels may also collect biological data from their catch when Northeast Fisheries Science Center scientists identify additional data needs. Our researchers verify what is reported by the captain and crew both at sea and through statistical data quality checks.

Borges likes using FLDRS because he says he knows that "the data we put in is accurate." He particularly likes the water temperature data. "It helps me as a fisherman, since the water temperature at the bottom tells me when I am on fish, and if I move away a couple of degrees, it makes a big difference to what I catch."

When he sells the fish, we can check his data against the dealer report to see where the fish was caught, the water temperature data for that tow, and the reported catch for that tow. This provides valuable information to fisheries scientists and managers who evaluate the health of the stocks and can incorporate data like these into their research and assessments.

For fishermen, participating in the Study Fleet enables them to contribute quantitative information to scientific research and improve understanding of the northeast's complex ocean ecosystem. Vessel owners receive financial compensation for their participation in the Study Fleet.



NOAA photos

GOFISH App

Currently, we are seeking to increase the value of the catch, effort, and environmental data available from Study Fleet fishing vessels. To do so, we are working with the fishing industry to develop an application called GOFISH, short for Graphical Offshore Fishing Information System Homepage. This system enables commercial fishing captains and vessel owners to map, graph, and analyze the data they entered through FLDRS. The GOFISH app produces temperature-depth plots, bycatch analysis graphics, and other visualizations that can assist in fishing operations. The data remain the property of the vessel owner, but can be contributed to research to improve our understanding of marine ecosystems.

I asked Borges what other fisherman thought about electronic monitoring and reporting.

"Nobody likes it, let's be honest, nobody likes to be monitored, nobody likes observers," says Borges. Instead, Borges suggests, "Let us do our stuff out there and monitor us at the dock, make it so you can't unload without a monitor." However, he does see the value in collecting scientific data through the FLDRS system. "Imagine if we had this data 40 years ago," Borges says.

Borges loves fishing, and although he doesn't know what the future will look like for our regional fishing industry, he does know what the immediate future holds for him. Once he finishes overhauling his boat, he will be back out fishing for another 200 days this coming year.

For more information, contact Bill Duffy, GARFO Port Agent, at William.Duffy@noaa.gov

Net study

Continued from page 3

catchability provides important information that helps us to ground truth stock assessment models, and in some cases develop direct estimates of stock biomass," Brown said.

"The more we can engage with commercial fishermen and use their knowledge to develop and implement research experiments, the better we can understand the ecosystem," said Anna Mercer, chief of the Cooperative Research Branch. "This experiment was a perfect example of an approach we can use in many ways across the region."

This net-spread study follows three earlier studies conducted on the F/V *Karen Elizabeth* in 2015, 2016, and 2017 on the efficiency of different nets or sweeps. These studies were recommended by the Northeast Trawl Advisory Panel, a joint advisory panel for the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils that is composed of fishermen, scientists, and managers.

For more information, contact Anna Mercer, Northeast Fisheries Science Center, at Anna.Mercer@noaa.gov.