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NOAA Approves State Spending Plans for Federal Red Tide Disaster Aid

NOAA today approved state plans for spending \$5 million in federal disaster aid intended to assist shellfish industries in Massachusetts, Maine and New Hampshire affected by a 2008 harmful algal bloom outbreak, commonly referred to as red tide. Maine and Massachusetts will each receive \$2 million and New Hampshire \$1 million to support industry-driven efforts to better address future harmful algal bloom outbreaks.

On November 14, 2008, the Secretary of Commerce declared a commercial fishery failure because large areas of the coastline had to be closed to the harvesting of clams, mussels, oysters and other shellfish. Shellfish in these coastal waters tested positive for infection, containing a single-cell algae that, when ingested by humans, can lead to potentially lethal paralytic shellfish poisoning.

Highlights of State Spending Plans

States plan to collaborate on a number of cross-state and independent research initiatives among these are:

- Provide continued support to the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution to map the extent and location of the *Alexandrium* cyst bed in the western Gulf of Maine for use as a predictive tool for state program managers;
- Produce outreach materials for use during the next severe bloom to provide the public with clear, accurate, and objective information about the risks of harmful algal blooms including harvest closures, consumption advisories, and the availability of wholesome seafood in commercial markets;
- Maine and New Hampshire will explore alternative methods to detect and monitor the shellfish biotoxin and investigate paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) in lobster tomalley;
- Maine will expand its buoy arrays for an existing PSP monitoring program;
- Massachusetts will develop and implement a lost income subsidy program to compensate Massachusetts commercial shellfish harvesters for their economic loss resulting from the 2008 harmful algal bloom event. In addition, funds will be used to support a health insurance subsidy program; and
- New Hampshire will expand and diversify its coastal shellfish aquaculture program in estuarine waters.

NOAA understands and predicts changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources. Visit <http://www.noaa.gov>