



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **NOAA Fisheries Announces Funding for Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Survey Program (NEAMAP)**

NOAA Fisheries has announced that, beginning in 2015, it plans to provide funding for inshore trawl surveys under the Northeast Area Monitoring and Assessment Program (NEAMAP). For the past six years, the Mid-Atlantic Council has provided funding for NEAMAP's Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic inshore trawl survey through its Research Set-Aside (RSA) Program. With a new source of funding available for the NEAMAP survey, the Council will consider next steps for the RSA program at the August Council meeting.

Established in 2006, NEAMAP is a cooperative research program that facilitates the collection and dissemination of fishery-independent information in the Northeastern United States. The Southern New England/Mid-Atlantic near shore trawl survey—one of three surveys operated by NEAMAP—is conducted twice a year by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) on board the *Darana R*, a 90-foot commercial trawler fishing vessel captained by Jimmy Ruhle from Wanchese, North Carolina. Data from these surveys has become an essential component of the region's stock assessments.

Although the RSA program was intended to be a temporary source of funding when the NEAMAP survey was initially developed, a long-term source was never identified and the Council has continued to fund the survey. In 2014, NEAMAP received more than 3 million pounds of RSA quota for seven Mid-Atlantic species.

In recent years, the Council has pushed for an alternative source of funding for NEAMAP. "This is an important breakthrough, and the Council applauds the Agency's efforts to secure funding for this survey, which is an essential component of our monitoring program. Cooperative research provides a means to improve the accuracy of stock assessments while engaging stakeholders in the research process" said the Council's Chairman, Rick Robins, "yet many important cooperative research programs face inadequate or uncertain funding from year to year."

Individuals from both the Council and NEAMAP have also noted that year-to-year fluctuations in quotas and changing market conditions make RSA funding a less than ideal source of funding for long-term research projects. "Surveys are most useful when they are conducted at regular intervals over a long enough time to reveal trends in abundance and distribution" said the Council's Executive Director, Chris Moore. "That kind of consistency for such a large-scale project is difficult to achieve without a dedicated source of long-term funding."

Although funding for the program is expected to start in Fiscal Year (FY) 2015, the announcement from NOAA Fisheries noted that funding decisions ultimately depend on the outcome of final FY15 Congressional Appropriations.