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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 26, 2009

NOAA Report Shows Rich Diversity Across U.S. Fishing Communities

A new report by NOAA's Fisheries Service detailing the diverse demographics of 222 American saltwater fishing communities will help the agency design management strategies that will lead to more sustainable fisheries.

"Fisheries management depends on an understanding of how people in coastal communities interact with marine ecosystems and how their economies work," said Jim Balsiger, NOAA assistant administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. "This report gives a clearer picture of the people living in America's fishing communities and their needs."

Fishing Communities of the United States, 2006 is NOAA's first national reference guide featuring snapshots of selected fishing communities and ports from the nation's 23 coastal states. The ports that are profiled were chosen by experts around the country, primarily on the basis of commercial fisheries landings in 2006 and the historical significance of fishing in a community. The report is a companion to the recently released *Fisheries Economics of the United States, 2006*.

The report shows that fishing communities range in size from small Downeast communities such as Winter Harbor, Maine, pop. 988, to cities such as San Diego, Calif., pop. 1,223,400. Some have large populations of people who speak a language other than English at home such as Ni'ihau, Hawaii (93.1 percent), while others have far fewer such as Theodore, Ala. where all but 2.8 percent of persons speak English at home.

Statewide trends from 1997 to 2006 about the number of building permits issued, fishery disaster declarations made, and unemployment rates are also included. This helps show which communities are experiencing some of the most rapid development or the most economic distress.

The report also contains information on education levels, poverty levels and ethnicity to help paint a clearer picture of each of these coastal towns and cities and how they compare to other communities in their states and the nation.

The report is the culmination of several years of data collection and analysis. NOAA plans to update this report once the agency has information from the upcoming 2010 national census.

Fishing Communities of the United States, 2006 is available online at http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/st5/publication/fisheries_communities.html Hard copies are forthcoming.

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