



Contact: Connie Barclay/Laura Hoberecht
301-713-2370

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 02, 2009

**NOAA Awards Grant to World Wildlife Fund
To Support Innovative Ideas to Reduce Bycatch**
Designs Now Being Accepted for 2009 Smart Gear Competition

NOAA's Fisheries Service has awarded a \$364,000 grant to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in support of the 2009 Smart Gear Competition, which awards prizes for innovative gear designs which reduce fisheries bycatch.

Bycatch occurs when fishermen catch unwanted fish species or wildlife along with their intended catch. Adaptations to fishing gear can reduce bycatch by allowing non-target species to escape from gear or avoid being captured. Fishermen who observe bycatch problems first-hand have developed some of the most effective methods to selectively target commercial species.

"The Smart Gear Competition is a model for cross-sector collaboration among government, conservation organizations, industry groups, fishermen and the scientific community," said James Balsiger, NOAA's acting assistant administrator for fisheries. "All parties involved are working together to find solutions."

The two-year NOAA grant to WWF will support the competition, plus extensive testing to further develop the winning designs. Launched in 2004, the competition has received entries from fishermen, chemists, engineers and inventors in previous years, resulting in hundreds of proposals from dozens of countries.

WWF plans to award a total of four prizes for the most promising technological developments: one grand prize of \$30,000; two runner-up prizes of \$10,000; and one special East African regional prize of \$7,500. The competition is accepting entries until June 30.

"WWF views the International Smart Gear Competition as an important tool in helping to identify simple, powerful change within fisheries around the world," said Mike Osmond, senior program officer for the WWF fisheries program. "Fishermen themselves are often the greatest innovators when it comes to effective ideas for reducing bycatch, and this competition seeks to identify those ideas with the greatest potential and reward them with cash prizes, as well as helping to advance the idea towards commercial adoption."

Previous Smart Gear Competitions have resulted in gear which minimizes bycatch of cod and flounder in the Northeast, juvenile red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico, and seabird and harbor porpoise in fisheries around the world.

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>.

For more information or to submit a gear design entry visit <http://www.smartgear.org>.

On the Web:

World Wildlife Fund: <http://www.wwf.org/>

Bycatch: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/bycatch.htm>

