



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
8/3/95

**SECRETARY BROWN ANNOUNCES \$25 MILLION IN
DISASTER ASSISTANCE FOR NORTHEAST FISHERIES**

The Commerce Department will provide an additional \$25 million in disaster assistance to help commercial fishermen and small fishery-dependent businesses that have sustained heavy losses from the collapse of groundfish fishery resources in the Northeast.

Commerce Secretary Ronald H. Brown will use his legislative authority to provide relief funds to the Northeast to expand and extend the vessel and permit buyout program that began earlier this year. The \$25 million for the Northeast is part of a larger \$53 million disaster assistance program initiated by Secretary Brown in response to the national crisis in fisheries in the Northeast, Northwest and Gulf states.

"The Clinton administration has consistently demonstrated its commitment to the sustainable development of commercial fisheries," Brown said. "Today's disaster assistance package also demonstrates our understanding that healthy stocks are a source of livelihood and a way of life in fishing communities around the country, and around the world. The threat to these fisheries is a threat to these communities."

The funds, issued through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Office of Sustainable Development, are designated for programs that address both fishery resource and human factors.

"We have already taken serious management actions in the Northeast to address the concerns of fishing families and about the resource, but we must do more," said NOAA Administrator D. James Baker. "Extraordinary measures are called for, both in how we manage these valuable resources and in how we respond to the needs of our fishing families."

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The \$25 million will expand the \$2 million Fishing Capacity Reduction Program to compensate fishermen who retire their fishing vessels and groundfish permits.

In March of last year, the Administration and Commerce Secretary Brown announced a \$30 million Northeast Fisheries Emergency Assistance Program to help address the adverse economic impacts on fishermen, their families, and fishing communities, caused by years of overfishing and severe management restrictions.

The Office of Sustainable Development was charged with designing a comprehensive program for addressing not only the fishery resource disaster but, just as importantly, the human dimensions of the disaster.

The program included revolving loan funds administered by local entities, technical assistance and planning grants administered by the Economic Development Administration, fishing industry grants targeted to individual fishermen to help identify new business/economic opportunities, the potential of aquaculture as a viable source of economic development and employment, and research on the viability of underutilized species.

In addition, NOAA entered into a cooperative agreement with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to administer \$1.3 million in fishing grants, which resulted in leveraging an additional \$1.3 million in non-federal funds.

NOAA also established six Fishing Family Assistance Centers in cooperation with the Department of Labor and individual state labor agencies, to help displaced fishermen and their families in identifying training/retraining opportunities. The centers also provide social services and financial and business counseling in cooperation with the Small Business Administration, and generally serve as focal points for providing help in applying for Department of Commerce fishing assistance.

Under section 308(d) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act, commercial fishermen who have suffered uninsured losses will be eligible for grants under programs to be developed in cooperation with their state government agencies.

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**SECRETARY BROWN ANNOUNCES \$53 MILLION IN DISASTER
ASSISTANCE FOR NORTHEAST, NORTHWEST AND GULF FISHERIES**

The Commerce Department will provide \$53 million in disaster assistance to help commercial fishermen and small fishery-dependent businesses following the collapse of fishery resources in the Northeast, Northwest and Gulf states.

Commerce Secretary Ronald H. Brown will use his legislative authority to provide the relief funds, extending to the Northeast and Gulf of Mexico a disaster relief program initiated last year in the Pacific Northwest. Last year's program was in response to the unprecedented low numbers of Pacific salmon stocks in the region.

"The Clinton administration has consistently demonstrated its commitment to the sustainable development of commercial fisheries," Brown said. "Today's disaster assistance package also demonstrates our understanding that healthy stocks are a source of livelihood and a way of life in fishing communities around the country, and around the world. The threat to these fisheries is a threat to these communities."

The funds, issued through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Office of Sustainable Development, are designated for programs that address both fishery resource and human factors.

"We have already taken serious management actions in all three regions to address the concerns of the resource and the fishing families, but we must do more," said NOAA Administrator D. James Baker. "Extraordinary measures are called for, both in how we manage these valuable resources and in how we respond to needs of our fishing families."

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In the Northeast, the groundfish stocks that had long sustained a healthy commercial fishery have disappeared. The assistance program includes \$25 million for the implementation of a vessel/permit buyout program that retires fishing vessels and buys back existing permits.

In the Northwest \$13 million in emergency assistance will be released to the states of Washington, Oregon and California as a result of the continuing disaster due to the effects of El Niño and years of drought on the salmon fisheries. These funds will augment the three-state Northwest Emergency Assistance Plan announced last year, which includes a vessel/permit buyout program and habitat restoration and data collection jobs program.

In the Gulf of Mexico, the commercial fishing industry will receive \$15 million in emergency assistance to compensate for equipment lost or damaged by uncharted seabed obstructions caused by major flooding over the past two years and other natural forces.

All of these situations involve serious harm to fishery resources, which has caused substantial loss to small fishing businesses and dependent coastal communities. In all three situations, adverse environmental conditions have aggravated already depleted fisheries resources.

"We intend to work very closely with all interested parties in the three regions to ensure that appropriate remedies are applied to the different circumstances," said Brown.

Under section 308(d) of the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act, commercial fishermen who have suffered uninsured losses will be eligible for financial assistance under programs to be developed in cooperation with their state government agencies.

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