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**Ocean Conservancy, Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society and Massachusetts Lobstermen Launch
“Massachusetts lobster fishing: The right way”**

New program highlights steps taken by Massachusetts lobstermen to reduce impacts on whales when fishing; buying local lobster supports economy and future of endangered whales

New Bedford, MA – Today marks the launch of “Massachusetts lobster fishing: The right way” – a labeling and education program to distinguish lobster caught in Massachusetts using fishing practices that are safer for whales. Massachusetts Lobstermen’s Association, Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, Ocean Conservancy and Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society are working with local restaurants, fish markets and seafood dealers to ensure that residents and visitors know to buy locally caught lobster. The signature green Massachusetts whale tail lobster claw band will signify lobster caught using safer fishing methods. These efforts ultimately support whale protection and the Massachusetts economy and lobster fishing heritage.

“The steps that the Massachusetts lobstermen have taken are an important start to getting endangered and threatened whale populations on the road to recovery. We are pleased to work with our partners on this program,” said Vicki Cornish, Vice President of Marine Wildlife Conservation at Ocean Conservancy. “Massachusetts is the leader on doing the right thing for the right whale, and other endangered whales. We hope to see these efforts expanded and hope that other East Coast fishing industries follow their lead.”

Massachusetts lobstermen are taking important steps to make the ocean safer for whales. Massachusetts is the first and only state to require year-round use of sinking groundline – line that links five to 25 lobster traps on the ocean floor – in all state waters, which reduces the threat to whales from lines near the ocean bottom. The State of Massachusetts also conducts abandoned or lost lobster gear removal projects and restricts the kind of fishing gear that can be used when whales are present in their critical habitat in Cape Cod Bay.

“Safer waters for whales and a successful lobster industry can exist together. We are pleased that our state’s lobstermen are proven innovators and are dedicated to fishing the right way,” said Paul Diodati, Director of Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries. “We look forward to working with our partners to distinguish the great work done by Massachusetts lobstermen.”



Buying local lobster in Massachusetts helps support efforts of local lobstermen who are investing in the protection of endangered whales even at a time of soaring fuel and bait costs. This summer and beyond, ask for and look for lobsters with the green band labeled with a Massachusetts whale tail on their claws. Consumers, restaurateurs and seafood buyers can be sure that lobster was caught using gear that is safer for whales.

“Our lobstermen have made an investment in our fishery, local economy and the protection of whales,” said Bill Adler, Executive Director of Massachusetts Lobstermen’s Association. “We are the first to take important steps with our fishing gear to protect whales and we hope to set an example for other fisheries along the East Coast.”

The waters off Massachusetts are important feeding habitat for protected and endangered whales, including minke, humpback, finback, and North Atlantic right whales. The North Atlantic right whale population is estimated at less than 400 individuals – it is gravely endangered. This whale, hunted to the brink of extinction, is now threatened by ship strikes and interactions with fishing gear. Massachusetts has a long history of lobster fishing dating back to 1808 when Ebenezer Thorndike of Swampscott invented the lobster trap. Lobster fishing in Massachusetts continues to be an important part of the Massachusetts way of life and economy. This partnership is creating a legacy of helping to conserve whales for our next generation to appreciate and protect.

“Just this year, at least 10 large whale entanglements have been reported and half of them involved endangered right whales,” said Regina Asmutis-Silvia, Senior Biologist for the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society. “We applaud Massachusetts lobstermen for changing their fishing methods to make them safer for whales. WDCCS believes this is the right thing to do and it should be acknowledged and supported. Choosing the green banded Massachusetts lobster is a way that consumers can also help.”

Visit www.masslobster.org for more information.

About Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries

The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (*Marine Fisheries*) mission is to manage the Commonwealth's living marine resources and the harvesting of those resources by the commercial and recreational fisheries, while maintaining a diverse number of self-sustaining fish populations at healthy levels of abundance in balance with the ecosystem. Thus, providing wealth and benefits to all citizens of Massachusetts. For more information visit <http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dmf/index.html>.

About Massachusetts Lobstermen’s Association

Founded in 1963 by lobstermen for lobstermen, Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association is backed with over 40 years of industry experience. Since its beginnings, the Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association Inc. has always worked to help this states lobstermen meet the challenges they face. It has worked to conserve the resource on which the lobstermen depend. Today, it is the major voice of the Massachusetts lobster industry. Through our commitment, experience, and expertise the Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association has established a unique relationship with our members that will last a lifetime! For more information, visit lobstermen.com.

About Ocean Conservancy

Ocean Conservancy is the world's foremost advocate for the oceans. Through science-based advocacy, research, and public education, we inform, inspire and empower people to speak and act for the oceans. Ocean Conservancy is headquartered in Washington, DC, and has offices in New England, Florida, the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico, and California with support from more than half a million members and volunteers. For more information, visit oceanconservancy.org.

About Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society

WDCS, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, is the global voice for the protection of cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) and their environment. We work to reduce and ultimately eliminate the threats to cetaceans and their habitats, while also striving to raise awareness of these remarkable animals and the need to protect them in their natural environment. WDCS has offices in the UK, Australia, Argentina, Germany and the US. For more information see www.wdcs.org.