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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sept. 3, 2014

NOAA's Fisheries Service Announces \$4.7 million in Funding to States and Tribes to Support Threatened and Endangered Species Recovery

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) is announcing \$4.7 million in grants through the Species Recovery Grant Program. This grant money will fund continuing multi-year awards as well as new awards for fiscal year 2014.

Four new awards funded in fiscal year 2014 will assist three coastal states and one federally recognized tribe with conservation projects designed to recover marine species listed under the Endangered Species Act. There are eleven multi-year state awards and two multi-year tribal awards that will continue in FY14, the second year of these grants.

"This program is critical in our efforts to implement high priority recovery work for threatened and endangered species," said Eileen Sobeck, NOAA Fisheries Administrator. "This funding is important, not only for these species, but for the communities and overall health of the environment, keeping it in balance and preserving it for generations to come. NOAA Fisheries proudly and strongly supports conservation efforts of our partner state and tribal agencies working with us to restore species vital to our nation's economy, environment and heritage."

Authorized under Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, the Species Recovery Grants Program supports management, research and outreach efforts designed to bring listed species to the point where ESA protections are no longer necessary.

The new and ongoing multi-year projects are listed below with the total amount of federal funding approved for each award. Funding for additional years is contingent on future appropriations and satisfactory progress of the work planned.

- 1) New 2014 Award - Georgia Department of Natural Resources (\$501,875, 3-year award): To quantify annual recruitment and nursery habitats of Atlantic sturgeon in Georgia.
- 2) New 2014 Award - Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (\$639,326, 3-year award): To guide implementation of a monitoring program to track coast-wide status and trends in abundance and distribution of eulachon in Oregon and Washington. Eulachon are small fish that spend most of their adult lives in the ocean, but return to their natal freshwater streams and rivers to spawn.
- 3) New 2014 Award - Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (\$159,055, 3-year award): To support a derelict fishing gear Reporting, Response, and Retrieval program designed to prevent re-accumulation of derelict fishing gear in rockfish habitat throughout Puget Sound.
- 4) New 2014 Award - Cowlitz Tribe (\$80,000, 1-year award): To conduct a high-resolution eulachon spawning stock biomass survey within the Cowlitz River to provide an accurate population abundance measure and inform agencies about potential of temporal variability in spawning stock sampling.
- 5) Ongoing Award - Alaska Department of Fish and Game (\$527,274, 3-year award): To identify the level and prevalence of mercury and organochlorine contamination in the

endangered western Steller sea lion population to assess potential causes of continued declines.

6) Ongoing Award - Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (\$304,754, 3-year award): To expand research and conservation efforts benefiting all five species of sea turtles occurring in Florida's waters: loggerhead, hawksbill, green, Kemp's ridley, and leatherback sea turtles.

7) Ongoing Award - Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (\$201,895, 3-year award): To collect data on fine-scale habitat use by juvenile smalltooth sawfish and their responses to varying freshwater inflow.

8) Ongoing Award - Georgia Department of Natural Resources and South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (\$402,031 (GA) and \$137,287 (SC), 3-year award): To support a genetic mark-recapture project for loggerhead sea turtles to estimate population size of nesting females annually and assess population status, characterize threats, and develop management strategies to assist their recovery.

9) Ongoing Award - Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (\$59,730, 3-year award): To conduct in-water sea turtle surveys and analyses of hawksbill and green sea turtle population dynamics for important foraging areas in Puerto Rican coastal waters.

10) Ongoing Award - South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (\$250,740, 3-year award): To monitor the temporal and spatial distribution of Atlantic sturgeon to fill data gaps regarding use of shelf habitat in U.S. territorial waters off South Carolina and Georgia.

11) Ongoing Award - South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (\$90,469, 2-year award): To examine the genetic relationship of Atlantic sturgeon in North and South Carolina river systems.

12) Ongoing Award - Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources (\$466,182, 3-year award): To prevent and document incidents of Hawaiian monk seal and green sea turtle disturbance by beach-goers and other ocean users; improve public support, understanding, and participation in "seal friendly" and "turtle friendly" practices; design and conduct a pilot, shoreline, recreational fishery observer program; and draft a joint State-Federal Hawaiian green turtle population assessment and monitoring protocol.

13) Ongoing Award - Maine Department of Marine Resources (\$479,449, 2-year award): To support the removal of the first migratory barrier on the Penobscot River, the Veazie Dam, to open 100% of the historic habitat for endangered shortnose sturgeon and threatened Atlantic sturgeon, as well as help restore 11 species of sea-going fishes, including endangered Atlantic salmon.

14) Ongoing Award - Maryland Department of Marine Resources and Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (\$171,351, 3-year award): To improve understanding of habitat use by both sub-adult and juvenile Atlantic sturgeon within the Chesapeake Bay, involving bay-wide collaboration.

15) Ongoing Award - Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (\$261,066, 3-year award): To strengthen southern resident killer whale protection by conducting public outreach and education, proactive law enforcement, vessel monitoring, and statistical evaluation of the effectiveness of the new vessel regulations.

16) Ongoing Award - Wiyot Tribe (\$77,088, 3-year award): To determine the current status and population of origin of green sturgeon in the Eel River, California.

17) Ongoing Award - Makah Tribe (\$125,865, 3-year award): To address three actions specified in the draft eastern steller sea lion DPS Post Delisting Monitoring Plan and to provide baseline data for a healthy population for comparison to studies of the western steller sea lion DPS. In addition, this project will examine gray whale populations, since recent research has found possible structuring of the gray whale population that may require management actions.

State applications for the 2015 grant cycle are currently being accepted and are due by November 7, 2014. Interested states and territories must enter into an ESA section 6 cooperative agreement with NOAA Fisheries to be eligible to receive a grant. For more information about Species Recovery Grants to States, the review and selection process, and past awards, please visit: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/conservation/states/>.

Tribal applications for the 2015 grant cycle are currently being accepted and are due by November 7, 2014. There is no cooperative agreement requirement for tribes. For more information about Species Recovery Grants to Tribes, the review and selection process, and past awards, please visit: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/conservation/tribes.htm>.

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