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GOVERNOR

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November 24, 2009 - For immediate release:

GOVERNOR PATRICK SIGNS SALTWATER FISHING PERMIT LAW

Massachusetts permit will cost less than federal alternative and keep benefits local

BOSTON – Tuesday, November 24, 2009 – Governor Deval Patrick has signed legislation creating a state saltwater fishing registry that requires saltwater anglers to purchase permits to fish in coastal waters starting in 2011, with proceeds benefitting state marine fisheries programs that improve public access and resource management.

“Many stakeholders have worked together to protect the state’s interests in designing this legislation,” Governor Patrick said. “I thank the legislators and recreational fishing organizations who crafted this measure and were instrumental in its passage.”

“By signing this legislation into law, Governor Patrick demonstrates the Commonwealth’s commitment to collecting recreational fishing data in order to comply with federal requirements, which will lead to better management of fisheries off our coast,” said Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Ian Bowles.

In 2006, the United States Congress amended the Magnuson-Stevens Act to require a national recreational saltwater fishing registry. Congress charged the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) with creating the registry, which scientists could access to improve recreational fishing data and fisheries management. Under the federal system, saltwater anglers must register online or by telephone in 2010. Beginning in 2011, federal registration will cost from \$15 to \$25 in states that do not have a saltwater permit systems.

The federal legislation included a provision allowing states to create their own saltwater fishing permit systems in lieu of participation in the federal registry. The law signed by Governor Patrick enables the Department of Fish and Game’s Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) to require saltwater anglers to purchase a saltwater fishing permit beginning in January 2011.

Under the new state law, the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) will propose an individual permit fee of \$10, with revenue from permit sales deposited into a state Marine Recreational Fisheries Development Fund administered by DMF in consultation with a newly created Marine Recreational Fisheries Development Panel. The revenue will pay for data collection and administration of the permitting program, programs to improve public access for recreational fishing, and better fisheries management.

“The Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game and its Division of Marine Fisheries look forward to designing a lower cost permit system that will improve fisheries data and provide local benefits to Massachusetts recreational fishermen,” said DFG Commissioner Mary Griffin.

“I am pleased that the salt water permit legislation approved by the Legislature and signed by Governor Patrick is reflective of the deliberations of the committee that worked so hard to make sure that the permit will benefit Massachusetts’ salt water anglers,” said Chuck Casella, chairman of the Recreational Registry Steering Committee.

The Department of Fish and Game (DFG) is responsible for promoting the enjoyment and conservation of the Commonwealth’s natural resources. DFG carries out this mission through land preservation and wildlife habitat management, management of inland and marine fish and game species, and enforcement of the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act. DFG promotes enjoyment of the Massachusetts environment through outdoor skills workshops, fishing festivals and other educational programs, and by enhancing access to the Commonwealth’s lakes and ponds.