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Coastal States Cooperative Enforcement Initiative Update

The NOAA Fisheries, Office for Law Enforcement (OLE) has been fortunate to have established enforcement partnerships with a number of states and several territories to facilitate compliance with the federal laws and regulations implemented to protect and conserve living marine resources. These partnerships have been formalized through the execution of Cooperative Enforcement Agreements. Though these partnerships and agreements have been in place for many years, they have only recently been supported with funding. In fiscal years 2001 and 2002 Congress appropriated \$15M each year to support these efforts.

At the outset of the funding program last year, we solicited proposals from the eligible states and territories. Interested participants provided their proposals to us and we worked with them to develop and fund the initiatives. We anticipate that as of June 1st, 2002 all FY 2001 funding will have been distributed with the completion and implementation of Joint Enforcement Agreements. The Joint Enforcement Agreement is the primary written instrument that is used to facilitate funding the Cooperative Enforcement partnerships. As we complete the 2001 process we will be requesting proposals for the '02 funding.

The funding has been allocated and distributed with respect to the nature and scope of the enforcement mission in the areas we serve. Allocations were based upon the strength and viability of the proposal submitted relative to the potential of the work to improve compliance with federal marine resource laws and regulations. Consideration was also given to the states' needs relative to their enforcement mission and initiatives and additional consideration was given to projects with the potential to eventually become institutionalized within the state missions. We believe that a critical component to the long term success of the program is state "ownership" in the initiatives and that they institutionalize them as a part of their services.

The funding for these agreements has been judiciously distributed among the states and territories who submitted proposals. Though it is premature to evaluate the success and productivity of the program, we have been very pleased with the participation and productivity levels to date. Though funding allocated to NOAA for this initiative has only been provided on a year to year basis for two years thus far and there is no assurance that continued funding will be forthcoming, we hope that the program results will generate future support and ongoing participation.