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TEAM MARYLAND FULFILLS ITS PROMISE TO HELP MARYLAND'S WATERMEN

WASHINGTON, DC – **U.S. Senators Benjamin L. Cardin** and Barbara A. Mikulski (Both D-MD) and Team Maryland colleagues Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-05), Roscoe Bartlett (MD-06), Elijah E. Cummings (MD-07), C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (MD-02), Chris Van Hollen (MD-08), John Sarbanes (MD-03) and Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards (MD-04) applauded the announcement today that Maryland will receive \$10 million to help watermen who have faced economic hardships due to years of declining Chesapeake Bay blue crab stock.

In September the Department of Commerce supported a request made by Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley for a disaster declaration for the Chesapeake Bay blue crab. The disaster declaration made Maryland's watermen eligible for emergency disaster funding, which was subsequently included by the Congress in an emergency funding bill. The \$10 million in funding for Maryland allocated by the Department of Commerce today will provide alternative economic opportunities for watermen and the processing industry, while state regulators work with the industry to rebuild stocks and restructure the fishery.

"I am pleased that Secretary Gutierrez has agreed to release the emergency assistance funds to aid Chesapeake Bay watermen," said **Senator Cardin, a member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee**. "The blue crab population has declined by 70 percent since the 1990s, seriously affecting the Bay ecosystem and undermining the economy of Maryland. This emergency funding will help ensure the survival of Maryland's crabbing industry and will lead to improved management to help rejuvenate the blue crab population."

"In May, I stood with Maryland's watermen and promised to stand up for them as they face a potential disaster to their way of life. My promises made are promises kept. This announcement is great news for Maryland. This is about lives and livelihoods in a struggling economy," said Senator Mikulski. "I will continue to lead Team Maryland in our efforts to protect the Bay and those whose livelihoods depend on it."

"Maryland's blue crab fishery and the health of the Chesapeake Bay have suffered as a result of declining crab populations," said Congressman Hoyer. "This emergency funding comes at a crucial time for our state's watermen to soften the blow of a shrinking harvest and a crab season that was cut short. Improving the blue crab habitat and restoring their population must remain a priority goal if we are to revive Maryland's fishery and preserve the ecosystem of the Bay."

"The release of this federal aid should bring some holiday cheer to ease the blows of a shorter blue crab harvest season and a weaker economy for watermen and seafood processing companies," said Congressman Bartlett. "They are the people who are the stewards we depend upon to provide a healthier Chesapeake Bay for future generations."

“The Maryland Blue Crab is one of the greatest symbols of our State, and its survival is essential to the survival of our State's economy," Congressman Cummings said. "As Marylanders continue to struggle through tough times, these funds become even more critical for the watermen and crab processors whose livelihoods depend on this industry. I applaud the hard work by my colleagues Senator Mikulski and Congressman Ruppertsberger in securing these funds as part of the greater goal of the entire Maryland delegation to protect the Chesapeake Bay and keep our State's economy afloat.”

“With our troubled economy and the early end to blue crab season, Maryland watermen need relief. The industry has faced a 70 percent decline since the 1990s. I am pleased we can help out watermen while also protecting the Chesapeake Bay,” said Congressman C.A. Dutch Ruppertsberger.

“This is a critical step to support our watermen and an industry that has supported the Chesapeake Bay and this region for generations," said Congressman Chris Van Hollen.”

“The blue crab has become synonymous with Maryland and the Bay,” said Congressman Sarbanes. “Watermen, more than any other group, have been impacted by their decline. I am glad that the Commerce Department is moving to provide one of Maryland's oldest and most important industries assistance in the face of new limits on the crab harvest.”

“Today’s announcement is welcome news to provide much needed funding to revitalize the Chesapeake Bay blue crab population and to minimize the financial impact on the watermen and crabbing industry that rely on them for their livelihood,” said Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards. “Through necessary environment and habitat restoration, I hope these funds will lead to a healthy blue crab population in the Chesapeake Bay. I applaud the dedication of the entire Maryland delegation in moving quickly to support an industry critical to Maryland’s economy.”

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