The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced a 2019 round of funding for the Fisheries Innovation Fund projects. Eight new fisheries conservation grants totaling $442,603 were awarded. The eight awards announced generated $635,824 in match from the grantees, providing a total conservation impact of $1,078,427.

Fisheries Innovation Fund was established in 2010 to foster innovation and support effective participation of fishermen and fishing communities in the implementation of sustainable fisheries in the United States. The Fisheries Innovation Fund is supported through a partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. This year’s grant slate funded projects that address fishermen and coastal communities’ key priorities to enhance the sustainability of their fisheries.

The following eight projects address two key strategies for United States fisheries: 1) bycatch reduction and capacity building and 2) recreational fisheries. In many cases, projects address both strategic priorities.

Expanding Best Fishing Practices to Strengthen Innovation Uptake (AK)
Grantee: Alaska Longline Fishermen’s Association
Grant Amount: ................................................................. $69,994
Matching Funds: ........................................................... $79,000
Total Project: ................................................................. $148,994
Enhance uptake of best fishing practices to improve the viability of small-scale fishing using a multi-tiered training program. Project will expand efforts to strengthen uptake of innovative tools and strategies through direct outreach to fishermen and by developing local expert trainers to continue the outreach.

(continued)
Implementing a Bycatch Avoidance Communication Network (RI, MA, NJ, NY)
Grantee: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County
Grant Amount: ...................................... $57,621
Matching Funds: .................................... $60,563
Total Project: ....................................... $118,184
Expand the Bycatch Avoidance Communication Network to identify and report real-time bycatch of nine species, helping to avoid the implementation of restrictive management measures associated with this bycatch. Project will enhance the network by improving daily reporting rates, recruiting additional vessels to the network, and conducting five at-sea observer days to facilitate proper reporting.

Developing a Strategic Framework for Permit Banking in the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Fishery (MS)
Grantee: Mississippi Commercial Fisheries United
Grant Amount: ...................................... $69,284
Matching Funds: ................................... $104,500
Total Project: ....................................... $173,784
Develop a strategic framework to advance permit and quota banking opportunities for Mississippi fishing communities in the Gulf of Mexico reef fish fishery. Project will develop a tool that could increase the capacity of individual fishermen and fishing businesses while helping to retain access to fisheries.

Reducing Discard Mortality in the Recreational Atlantic Striped Bass Fishery (NY)
Grantee: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County
Grant Amount: ...................................... $78,797
Matching Funds: .................................... $78,865
Total Project: ....................................... $157,662
Conduct outreach and education in the recreational Atlantic striped bass fishery on proper fish handling and fishing methods in order to reduce discard mortality in Long Island, New York waters. Project will target recreational anglers through fishing groups, charter boats, and fishing expos to offer education on techniques to lower discard mortality in the recreational Atlantic striped bass fishery.

Developing the Next Generation of Massachusetts Fishermen Through a Registered Apprentice Program
Project State: Massachusetts
Grantee: Fishing Partnership Support Services
Grant Amount: ...................................... $65,000
Matching Funds: .................................... $111,519
Total Project: ....................................... $176,519
Increase the fisheries workforce by training the next generation of professional fishermen. Project will utilize a four-week apprentice program registered with the state of Massachusetts to train the next generation of fishermen and improve safety, profitability, and conservation in the New England groundfish, scallop, and lobster fisheries.

Engaging the Next Generation of Commercial Fishermen in the Gulf of Mexico (TX, LA, MS, AL, FL)
Grantee: Reef Fish Conservation and Education Foundation
Grant Amount: ...................................... $25,835
Matching Funds: .................................... $56,337
Total Project: ....................................... $82,172
Develop a workforce training program to recruit and educate young fishermen for the commercial seafood harvesting sector. Project will engage fishery leaders from various fisheries across the Gulf of Mexico in face-to-face meetings to design and plan a young fishermen training program for the Gulf of Mexico and develop a review of similar programs around the U.S.

Developing a Crew Training Program for Young Fishermen in Cape Cod (MA)
Grantee: Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen’s Alliance
Grant Amount: ...................................... $50,072
Matching Funds: .................................... $55,200
Total Project: ....................................... $105,272
Develop a crew training program focused on safety and fishing skills to build capacity for the next generation of fishermen on Cape Cod. Project will prepare 60 to 80 participants with necessary knowledge for commercial fishing, connect captains to competent crew members and promote fishing as a viable career path.

Planning a Collaborative Sustainable Seafood Strategy in Puerto Rico
Grantee: The Ocean Foundation
Grant Amount: ...................................... $26,000
Matching Funds: .................................... $89,840
Total Project: ....................................... $115,840
Promote locally caught fish and plan a social marketing campaign to raise awareness about local fish markets, local sustainable seafood, and underutilized species thus creating new access to markets for Puerto Rico’s fishermen. Project will engage industry stakeholders and develop an outreach plan to facilitate access and commercialize sustainable products.