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**COMMERCIAL FISHERMAN SENTENCED FOR ILLEGALLY OVERFISHING
STRIPED BASS**

Greenbelt, Maryland - U.S. District Judge Peter J. Messitte sentenced Dennis Dent, age 47, a commercial fisherman from Cherry Hill, Va., today to five months of incarceration and five months of home detention for violating the Lacey Act concerning the illegal sale and fishing of striped bass, also known as rockfish. Dent also was ordered to serve three years of supervised release, to pay a \$1,000 fine, which will go to the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, and to pay \$5,818 in restitution to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to be used to fund projects for the protection and restoration of marine and aquatic resources of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

The sentence was announced by United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein and Ignacia S. Moreno, Assistant Attorney General, Environment & Natural Resources, U.S. Department of Justice.

According to Dent's plea agreement, from at least 2005 through 2007, Dent was a licensed commercial fisherman in Virginia. As a commercial fisherman Dent knew that he was subject to a maximum quota in pounds of striped bass that he was allowed to harvest in a year and that all striped bass caught were required to be "tagged" with a plastic tag issued by the state. In addition, to protect spawning striped bass and the viability of the striped bass fishery, there are additional restrictions concerning fish size limits, gear use, gear types, and closed seasons.

Dent admitted that between 2005 and 2007, with the help of others, he unlawfully harvested 16,647 pounds of striped bass, with a fair market retail value of approximately \$83,236, from the Potomac River and its tributaries. Dent failed to affix tags or affixed false tags to the striped bass, thereby exceeding the amount of striped bass he was permitted to catch by thousands of pounds. Dent also harvested striped bass in violation of size limits and seasonal closure rules designed to protect spawning fish. Dent transported and sold the illegal fish to Profish, Ltd., one of Washington, D.C.'s largest fish wholesalers.

On July 1, 2010, following a five-week jury trial, Profish, Ltd., its vice-president Timothy Lydon, and its fish buyer, Benjamin Clough, all were convicted of felony conspiracy to

violate the Lacey Act by purchasing the illegal striped bass from Dent and others. Profish, Lydon, and Clough, as well as four remaining fishermen defendants, who also sold to Profish, are all scheduled to be sentenced on or before November 8, 2010.

The five defendants to be sentenced on November 8, 2010, will mark the end of an investigation and prosecution that has resulted in the convictions in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia of 19 individuals and three fish wholesale companies. These cases were the result of the investigation by an interstate task force formed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Maryland Natural Resources Police and the Virginia Marine Police, Special Investigative Unit in 2003.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Stacy Dawson Belf for the District of Maryland and Senior Trial Attorneys Wayne Hettenbach and Kevin M. Cassidy of the Justice Department's Environmental Crimes Section.