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For Immediate Release

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Lobster Foundation Announces Final Groundline Exchanges for All Fishermen

Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation (GOMLF), a Maine-based non-profit which collaborates with lobstermen and scientists on industry-based research projects, will hold the final phase of the Bottom Line Project for Maine lobstermen and other fishermen during the Spring of 2010.

A waiting list for the program has been maintained since April 2009, when the broad-based sinking groundline requirements of the Final Whale Rule went into effect for the lobster industry. Recent federal funding has been awarded to GOMLF to make the additional exchanges possible, and to offer the exchange opportunity to other fixed-gear fishermen.

The groundline exchanges will be held at three locations over the next month – April 28-29 in Ellsworth, May 6 in the Portland area, and May 12-13 in the Rockland area. Additional dates or locations may be offered if necessary to accommodate Maine fishermen on the waiting list.

Lobstermen and other fishermen who fish outside of the whale exemption line and use fixed gear with groundlines (e.g the hagfish, shrimp, gillnet or crab fisheries) are encouraged to pre-register by contacting GOMLF. Based on the size of the waiting list, it is anticipated that at least 500,000 pounds of floating groundline will be brought in for exchange.

Participating fishermen will receive vouchers worth \$1.40 per pound toward the purchase of replacement sinking groundline at participating rope dealers in Maine and New Hampshire. Sinking groundlines, which are more expensive and less durable than floating groundlines, are required in many areas to comply with the federal regulation aimed at reducing the entanglement potential for large whales.

Since its first collection in 2007, the Bottom Line Project has collected over 1.5 million pounds of floating groundline and has issued vouchers to lobstermen worth over \$2.1 million. All of the collected rope has been recycled for use in making plastic products, or has been used by artisans to weave doormats or other rope products.

For more information on the Bottom Line Project, visit www.gomlf.org or contact Laura Ludwig at the Gulf of Maine Lobster Foundation, 207-985-8088.