

**WORKING WATERFRONT FESTIVAL
PRESS RELEASE**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**OVER 100 PERFORMERS ON TAP FOR 2008 WORKINGWATERFRONT FESTIVAL
Northern Neck Chantey Singers to be Featured Performers**

New Bedford, MA, September 2, 2008— The 2008 Working Waterfront Festival, an annual celebration of commercial fishing culture, will offer visitors a rare opportunity to hear authentic workshops performed by **The Northern Neck Chantey Singers** a group of retired menhaden fishermen who keep their unique tradition of African-American work songs alive. The festival takes place in New Bedford, America's largest commercial fishing port, on Saturday and Sunday, September 27th & 28th.

Music is one of the ways the festival presents commercial fishing culture. Performances include traditional sea chanteys, music reflecting the industry's ethnic diversity, and music about commercial fishing often performed by musicians who work in the industry. More than one hundred performers will grace the stage at this year's event.

The Northern Neck Chantey Singers live on a peninsula lying between the Rappahannock and Potomac Rivers in Lancaster and Northumberland Counties of Virginia. As young men, they worked aboard fishing boats where they pulled up by hand nets teeming with menhaden from the waters of the Chesapeake and Atlantic. Work songs such as "Help Me to Raise 'Em" were an integral part of coordinating the hauling of the purse seine (nets filled with thousands of pounds of fish). Until the group was organized in 1991, this tradition was little known because the songs were sung only at sea. **The Northern Neck Chantey Singers** is comprised of seven men in their late 60s, 70s and early 80s who fished for menhaden in waters from the Chesapeake Bay to the Atlantic Ocean from the 1930s to the 1980s. They have appeared on radio, television and at festivals throughout the country to share their rich culture with others. In addition to presenting their music, individuals from the group will demonstrate knot tying, net mending, galley cooking and participate in several panel discussions on the festival's Narrative Stage.

The **Working Waterfront Festival** is a project of the **Community Economic Development Center of Southeastern MA**, a non-profit organization. The FREE festival, a family friendly, educational celebration of New England's commercial fishing industry, features live maritime and ethnic music, fishermen's contests, fresh seafood, vessel tours, author readings, cooking demonstrations, kid's activities and more. It all takes place in New Bedford, MA, America's #1 fishing port, on the fourth full weekend of September. Navigate to us at www.workingwaterfrontfestival.org.

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