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Developing Both Commodity and Niche Markets for Cow Nose Ray 2007 Final Report

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Fishery Resource Grant Final Report

L.D. Amory & Co. Inc

"Developing Both Commodity and Niche Markets for Cow Nose Ray"

December 14, 2007

The purpose of our project was to help develop a three-tiered market for Cow Nose Ray. In order to do this, we built a 26 X 26 ray processing room. From May 2007 through September 2007 we bought and processed 258,416 pounds of CNR from local fishermen. We also purchased 7,250 pounds of frozen wings from two other CNR processors. A small amount of CNR were washed and sold as fresh whole Ray to local peddlers. Other fresh CNR were cut for wings, skin on fillets, and skin off fillets. When cutting fresh CNR, the bodies are discarded and only the wings are used. In 2008 we will add a high end tenderloin cut in addition to the fillet cut, to maximize our yield. The majority of the CNR were washed and put on freezer racks lined with wax coated cardboard. After two days in the freezer they were ready to be processed. The wings were cut off, size graded, and put into plastic lined 50 pound boxes. The bodies were cut into 3 X 6 chunks and put into 30 pound freezer boxes for the bait market. There are customers lined up for the frozen wing export market, however there are many factors that need to be analyzed closer to determine if this is cost effective. The frozen wings were sold for between \$.65 and \$.85 /pound. This is too low of a price if you factor in the time and cost of processing and the cost of shipping the CNR wings overseas. Also is the issue of the bodies cut for the bait market. The bait market was promising, however the majority of our bait was sold for conch bait and the feedback has not been positive. The bait sold to the long liners in NC got positive feedback but 4 pallets is only a small portion of the bait we produced. The stone crab bait has had some small success, but not enough to carry the bait market. This area really needs to be addressed. The volume of product to dispose of if the bait market does not develop would be enormous. The cost to dispose of this, if we could get them to take it, would a minimum of \$.06. The fresh fillet market had mild

success selling fillets at \$4.00/ pound. By the end of the season there were numerous requests for samples and sales of 15 pound boxes. With some improvements in processing, an increase in the wing price, and a market for the bait.....2008 should give us some success. The success will also be dependent on marketing help from the VMPB and financial help from the VMRC and VIMS.