



NOAA
FISHERIES

Nov/Dec 2022 Draft ALWTRT Meeting Summary* and Next Steps

*Team has not yet completed review of Key Outcomes

GARFO PRD, Feb 2023

Update on Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan

- Charge to the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team
- Risk reduction measures
- Overview of package recommendations and vote outcome
- January right whale entanglements



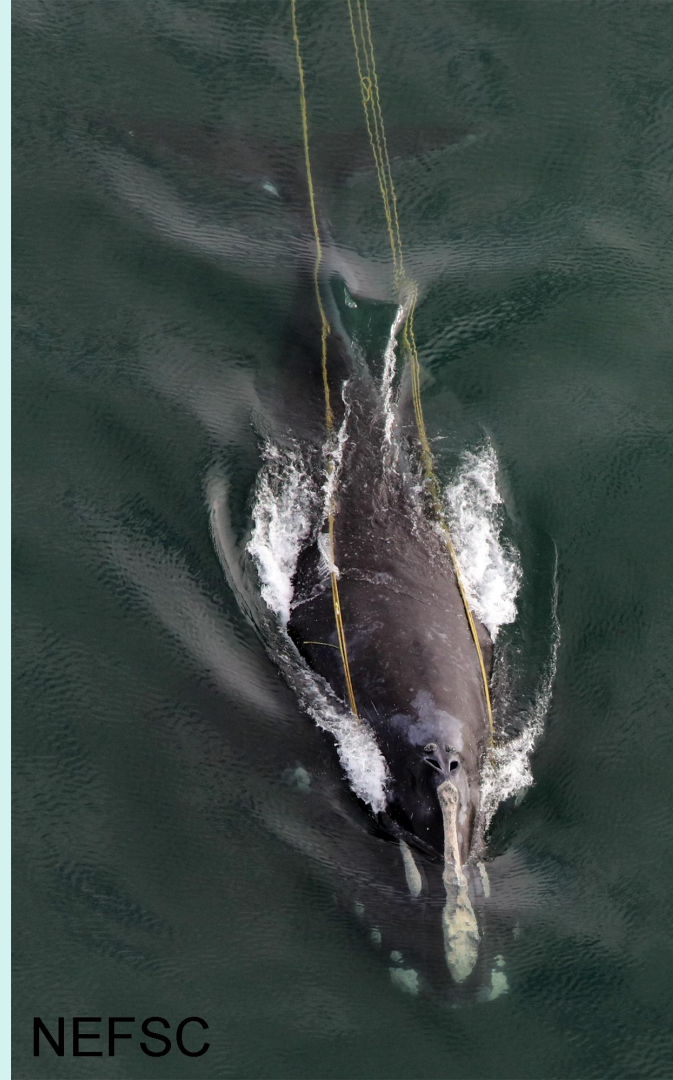
Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan

Mandated by law (MMPA) when incidental mortality and serious injury in U.S. commercial fisheries exceeds Potential Biological Removal (PBR)

- Develop and recommend measures to reduce mortality and serious injury
- Consensus-based
- NMFS ultimately responsible for taking action

Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team

- 60 member team including 23 fishermen
- Right, humpback, and fin whales



NEFSC

Fisheries Managed Under the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan

1. **Northeast lobster and Jonah crab trap/pot fishery**
2. **Mid-Atlantic gillnet fisheries** for monkfish, spiny dogfish, smooth dogfish, bluefish, weakfish, menhaden, spot, croaker, striped bass, large and small coastal sharks, Spanish mackerel, king mackerel, American shad, black drum, skate species, yellow perch, white perch, herring, scup, kingfish, spotted seatrout, and butterfish
3. **Northeast sink gillnet fisheries** for Atlantic cod, haddock, pollock, yellowtail flounder, winter flounder, witch flounder, American plaice, windowpane flounder, spiny dogfish, monkfish, silver hake, red hake, white hake, ocean pout, skate spp, mackerel, redfish, and shad
4. **Northeast drift gillnet fisheries** for shad, herring, mackerel, and menhaden and any residual large pelagic driftnet effort in New England
5. **Southeast Atlantic gillnet fisheries** for finfish, including, but not limited to: king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, whiting, bluefish, pompano, spot, croaker, little tunny, bonita, jack crevalle, cobia, and striped mullet
6. **Southeast Atlantic shark gillnet fisheries** for large and small coastal sharks, including but not limited to blacktip, blacknose, finetooth, bonnethead, and sharpnose sharks
7. **Northeast anchored float gillnet fishery** for mackerel, herring (particularly for bait), shad, and menhaden
8. **Atlantic mixed species trap/pot fisheries** for hagfish, shrimp, conch/whelk, red crab, Jonah crab, rock crab, black sea bass, scup, tautog, cod, haddock, Pollock, redfish (ocean perch), white hake, spot, skate, catfish, stone crab, and cunner
9. **Mid-Atlantic trap/pot fisheries** for lobster and Jonah crab
10. **Atlantic blue crab trap/pot fishery** for Atlantic blue crab

2022 Charge to the Take Reduction Team

Create recommendations to NMFS to reduce M/SI of right whales in U.S. commercial fisheries to below Potential Biological Removal Level (PBR=0.7/year)

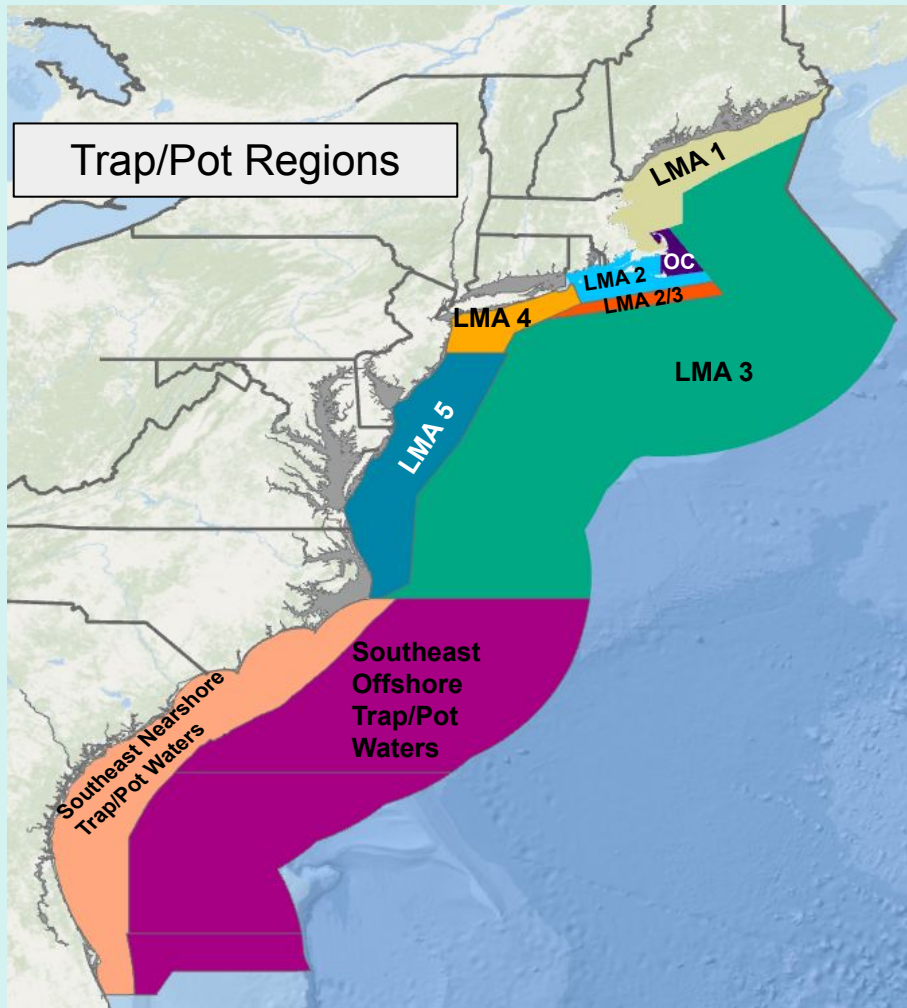
~88-93 percent total risk reduction, or an additional 41 to 46% of the risk remaining after implementation of the September 2021 Final Rule.



Recommended Measures Brought to a Vote

Types of Measures:

- **Closures to buoy lines:** in Northeast many large seasonal buoy line closures
 - Implementation challenges discussed:
 - Could not avoid economically important months
 - Ropeless not ready or affordable on a large scale
 - Gear conflict and enforcement
 - Most allow gear to move and therefore can reduce, but doesn't remove, all risk
- **Line Reductions:** seasonal and year round trap caps, line caps, trawling up, one buoy line trawls
 - Implementation challenges discussed:
 - Trap caps - equity concerns if applied to only one state
 - Line caps - administration (by permit?) and enforcement
 - Trawling up - safety on smaller vessels
 - One endline requires modifications of FMPs and concerns around gear conflict
- **Weak rope**
 - Implementation challenges discussed
 - Not as good as less rope, disliked by NGOs and some academics
 - Not available in deep waters (over 100 fathoms?)
 - Lost gear, safety, etc.



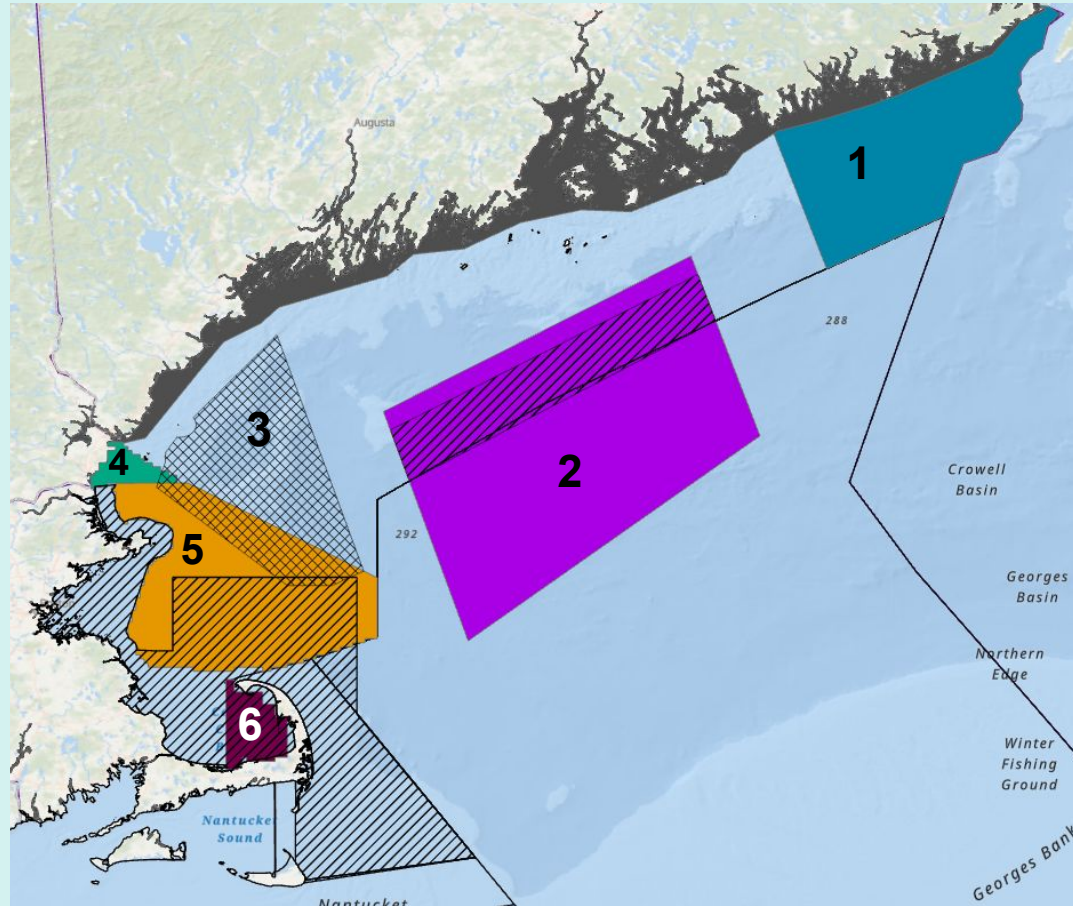
Trap/Pot Package Elements

Trap/Pot LMA 1

Seasonal Closures to Buoy Lines:

1. **New:** ME Zone A*; Jun, Jul
2. Expand LMA1 RA; Oct-Jan
3. **New:** Jeffreys; Jan-May
4. **New** NH Waters; Mar, Apr
5. Expand MRA to Stat Area 514 Fed, and from Feb-**May**
6. Expand MRA closure to **Dec and Jan** in Cape Cod Bay East

Existing closures shown with a dashed line.



Trap/Pot LMA 1 continued

Line Reduction:

- Reduce to 400 Traps for all vessels fishing in Maine lobster zones and Jeffreys Ledge polygon (3 in yellow in previous slide)
- Line cap @ 30 lines in Jeffreys Ledge polygon (3) Nov-Dec (closed Jan-May).
- Trawl up to 10 in Mass LMA1 state waters Dec-Jan, 15 in Mass LMA1 3-6 miles, 20 in Mass LMA1 6-12 miles

Weak Rope

1700 breaking strength as rope or as weak inserts every 60 feet; for tag line = 600 lbs as rope or weak inserts every 60 feet

- In < 50 Fathoms: 100% Weak @ 1,700 re weak insert every 60 feet
- 50-100 Fathoms: 1 hauling line 100% weak* @ 1,700 lbs, 1 tag line @ 600 lbs;
- 100+ Fathoms: 1 hauling line top 33% weak @ 1,700 lbs, 1 tag line @ 600 lbs

Trap/Pot: Outer Cape Cod

Seasonal Closures to Buoy Lines:

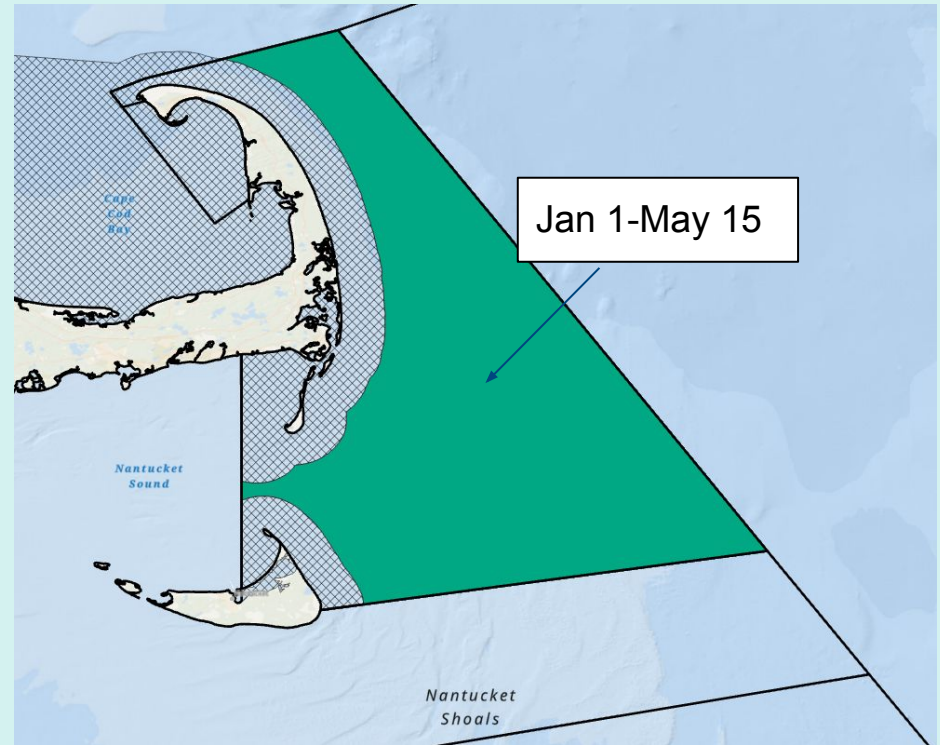
OCC federal waters (green) Jan 1-May 15

Seasonal Line Reduction:

10 trap trawls in December

Weak Rope:

100% weak (stronger float chafing rope in bottom few fathoms)



Southern New England (LMA2 and 2/3 Overlap)

Seasonal Closures to Buoy Lines:

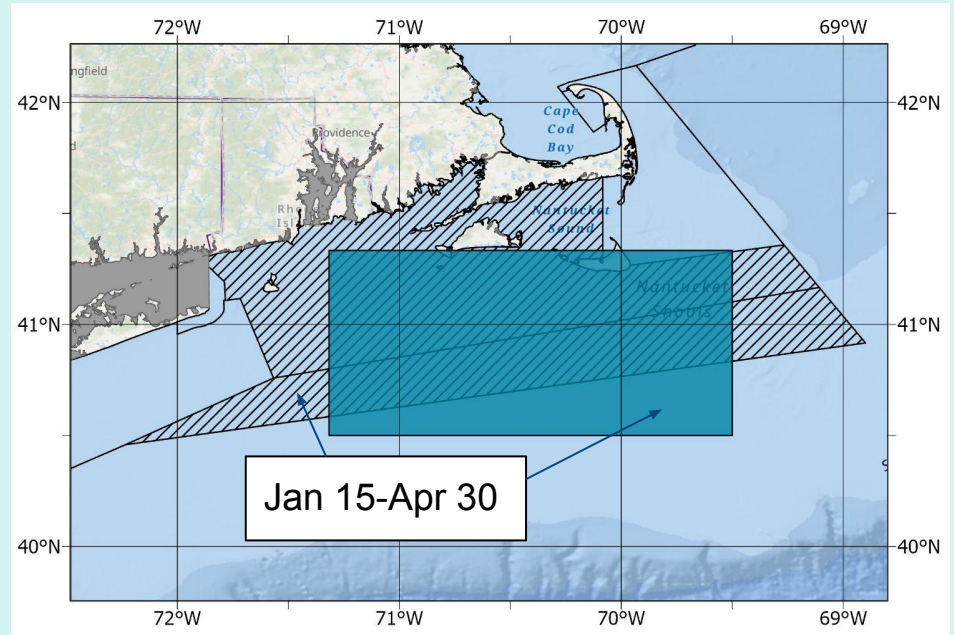
Expand buoy line closure to entire LMA2 and LMA 2/3 overlap (hatched areas) between Jan 15-Apr 30

Line Reduction:

- Trawls with only one buoy line within LMA 2 and LMA 2/3 overlap (hatched area)
- 15 traps/trawls in federal waters south to 41°
- 30 traps/trawl South of 41°N

Weak Rope:

100% (to bottom few fathoms of rope)

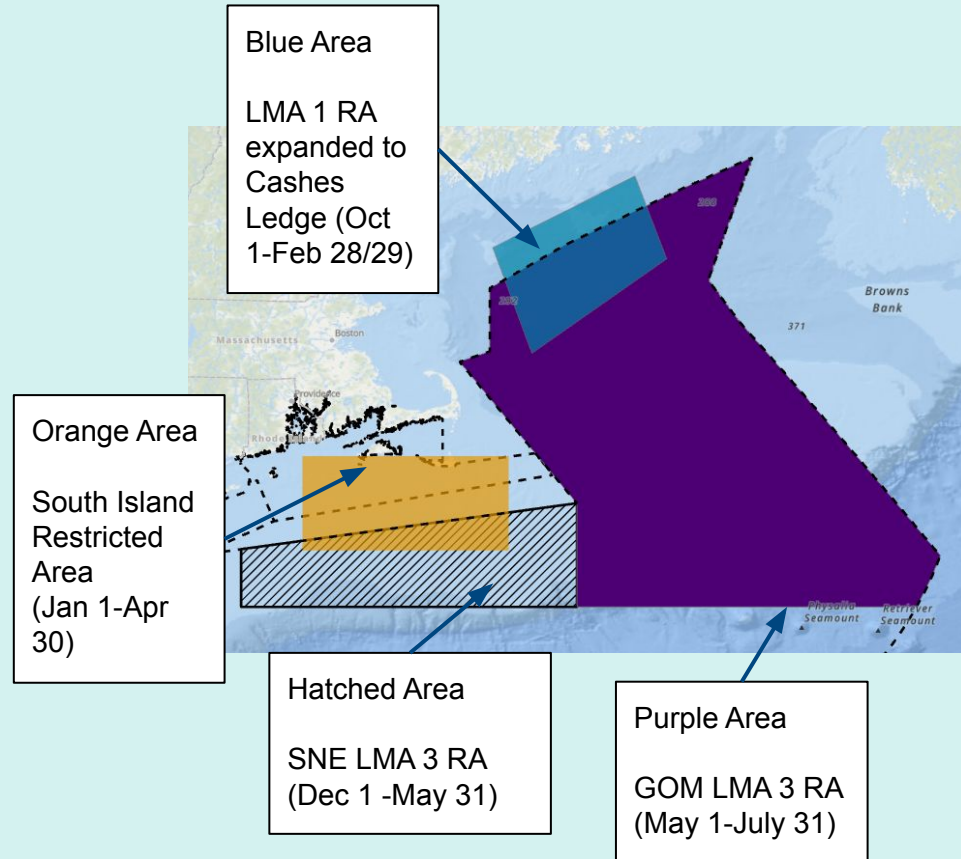


Trap/Pot: Lobster Management Area 3

Closure areas identified by NMFS due to achieve sufficient risk reduction within LMA3

Buoy Line Closures:

- **New:** Expand the LMA 1 Restricted Area to Cashes Ledge (blue) Oct 1-Feb 28/29
- Expand the South Island Restricted Area to January (orange) Jan 1-Apr 30
- **New:** GOM LMA 3 North Closure (purple) May 1-Jul 31
- **New:** Southern New England LMA 3 closure (hatched area) Dec 1-May 31



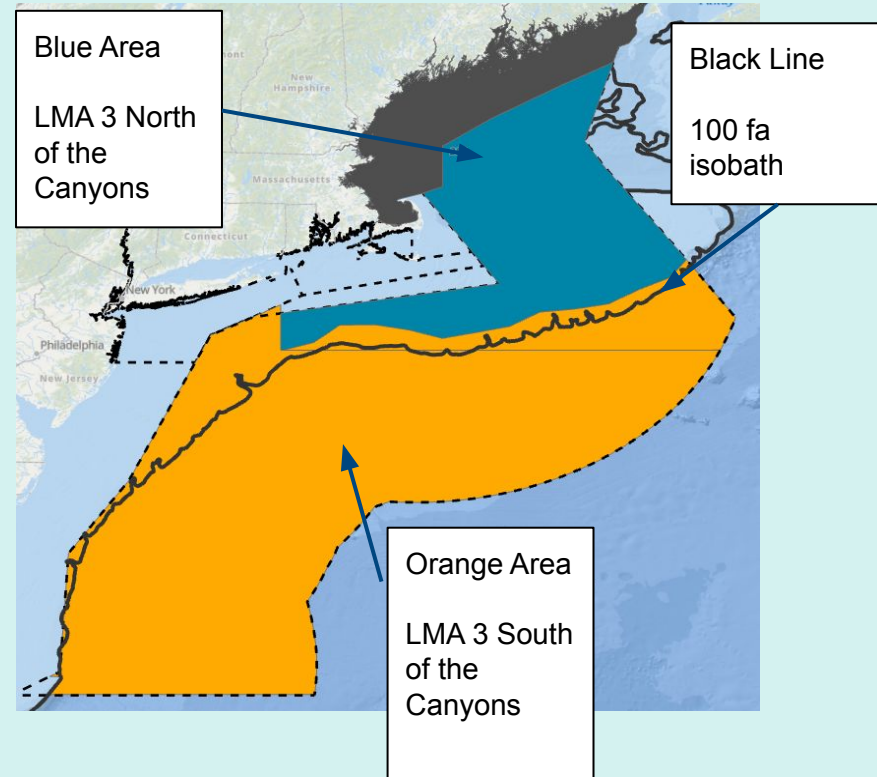
Trap/Pot: Lobster Management Area 3 continued

Line reduction:

- Line cap for LMA 3 lobster set at 45
- Remove one endline in North of Canyons area year round
- Remove one endline in LMA 3 South of Canyons thru Mid-Atlantic
 - In depths less than 100 fa: year-round
 - In depths greater than 100 fa: May-Sept

Weak Rope:

- Top 33% weak at 1,700 lb (less than current requirement)



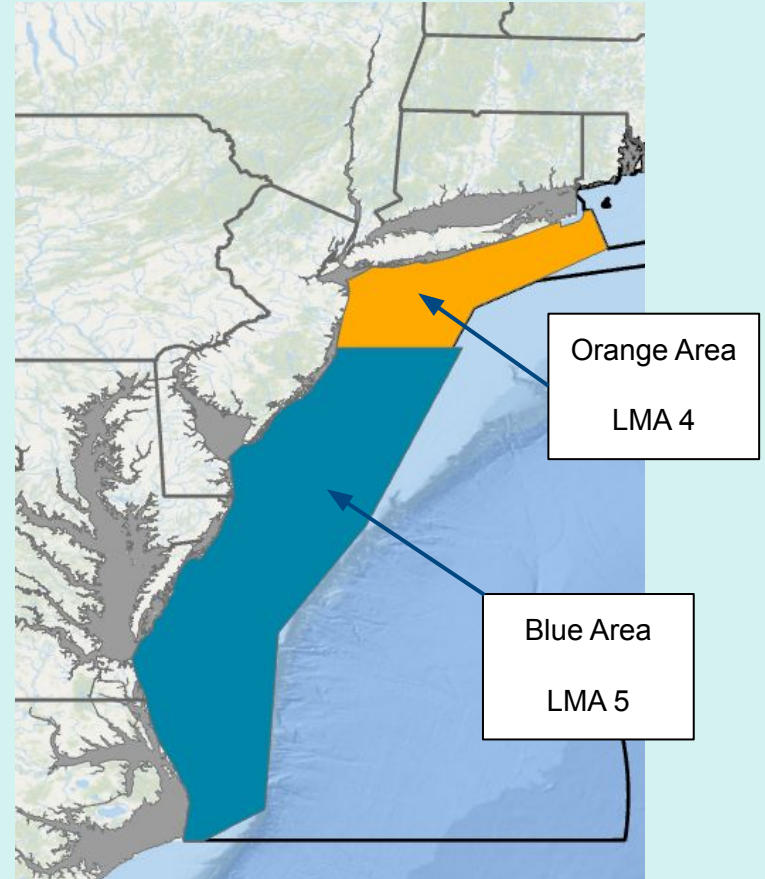
Trap/Pot: Lobster Management Areas 4 & 5

Line reduction:

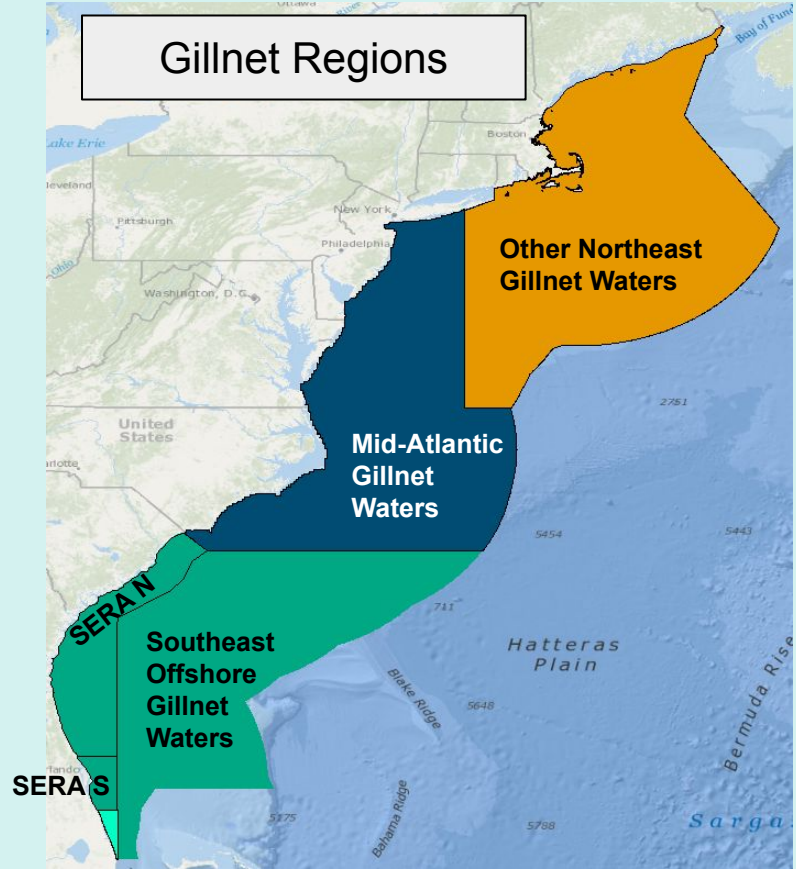
- Min 20 traps/trawl, Lobster
- Min 20 traps/trawl, Black Sea Bass from NY-VA
- One endline for trap/pot fisheries DE, MD, and VA

Weak Rope:

100% Weak at 1,700 lb

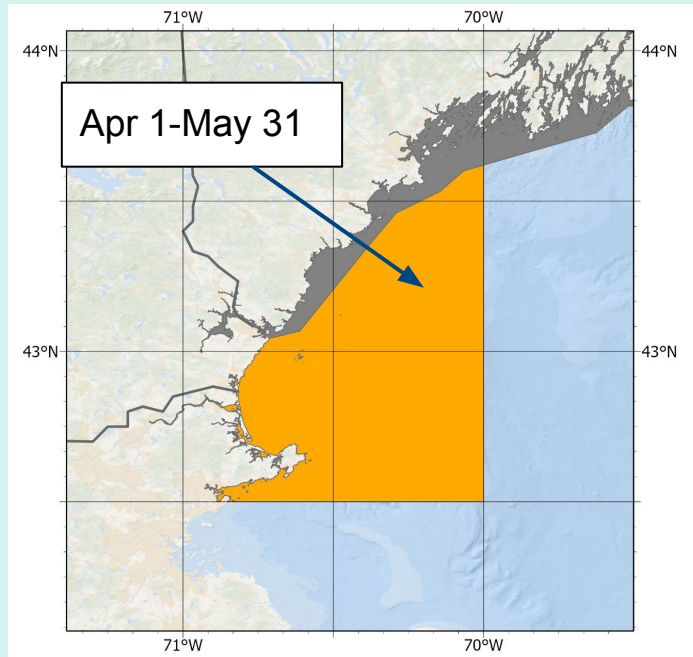


Gillnet Package Elements

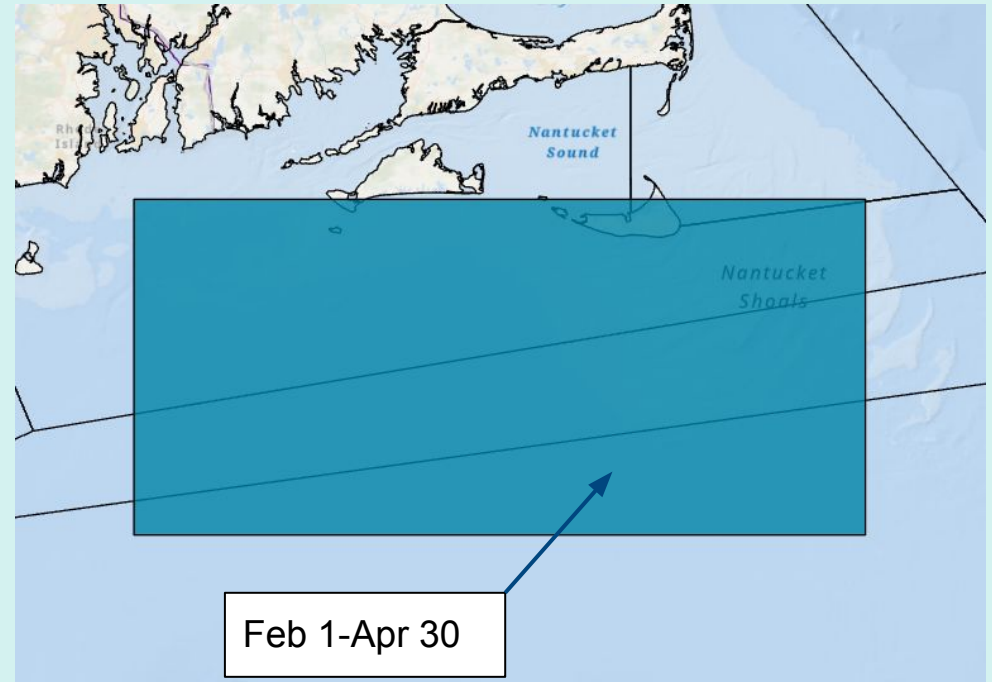


Gillnet Closures

Seasonal Closure west of 70° and north of 42.5° (orange) Apr 1-May 31



Closure of South Islands Restricted Area (blue) to include gillnet Feb 1-Apr 30



Coastwide Gillnet Line Reduction and Weak Rope

Line Reduction:

- GOM and SNE Endline cap of 12 (apply by fishery as derived from trip reports/landings)
- Mid-Atlantic one buoyline (smooth dogfish, spiny dogfish, bluefish) year round NY to VA

Weak Rope:

- GOM: 75% weak in waters <50 fa, 50% weak in waters >50 fa
- SNE: 100% weak (full weak in top, links in bottom)
- Mid Atlantic:
 - NJ-NC 1,100 lb Headrope (full or insert every 75 ft, Nov-Apr in NC)
 - NJ-VA 1,700 lb buoy lines
 - NC Federal Waters: 1,700 lb on both buoy lines (Nov-Apr)
 - NC State Waters: 1,700 lb on one buoy line, one 1,100 lb weak tag line (Nov-Apr)

Package would increase risk reduction to 88% coastwide

Poll: Can you support this team package?

Count (n=45):	Caucus represented in votes :
7% (3) Support	Fishery managers and industry
45% (20) Support with reservations	Fishery managers, industry and academics
32% (14) Could not support/oppose	Fishery manager, industry, NGOs and academics
16% (8) Abstain	Fishery managers and NGOs

Areas of General Support

No strong opposition:

- Gillnet measures
- Mid Atlantic and Southeast measures

Mixed support:

- NGOs and some academics did not support weak rope
- Measures supported would require some progress toward ropeless (sets with one endline, alternatives to large seasonal closures); a statement of support with non-binding deadlines did not achieve consensus
- The addition of some risk reduction for the increased value of the Massachusetts Restricted Area had some verbal support, no direct opposition, but was not included within recommendation package that went to vote.
- There was some support for Maine managed and monitored dynamic closures for Maine Zone A, but wasn't elevated to the recommendations package that went to vote.

Concerns:

- LMA3 request to accept the package proposal as interim until AOLA submits submit a proposal of equal value (by January 20, 2023)

Some Anticipated Next Steps

Consolidated Appropriations Act, December 29 2022*

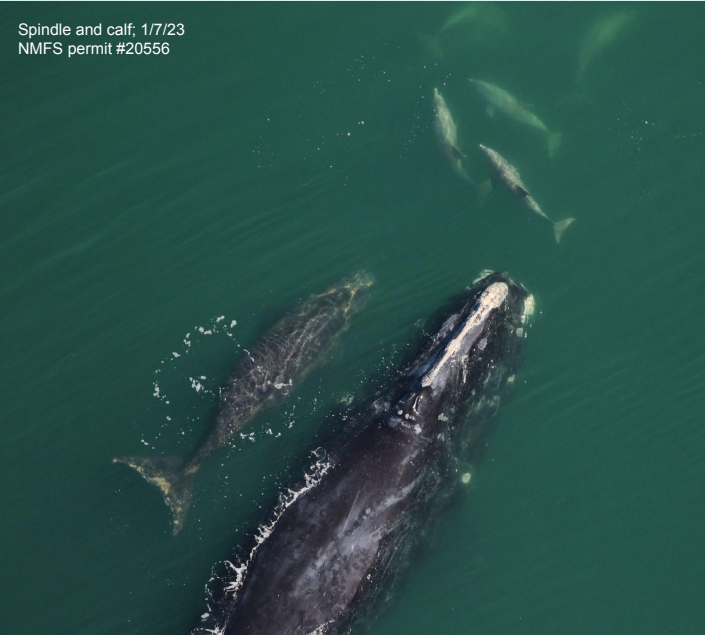
Research;

- With the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, prioritize efforts to advance ropeless and other technological solutions
 - Essential to implement TRT recommendations to fish with only one buoy line
 - Solution to seasonal closures
- Coastwide - prioritize survey and other data collection to improve model inputs on right whale and fishery distribution to support future decision making

Rulemaking:

- Seasonally close the “wedge” area circumscribed by the Massachusetts Restricted Area.
- Reduce risk of Atlantic gillnet and mixed species and blue crab trap/pot fisheries
- With Councils and Commission, allow alternative (to buoys) gear marking schemes
- Effective 12/31/2028 develop and propose regulations to reduce US takes to below PBR,

Implications for MAFMC-Managed Fisheries



- Gillnet fisheries
 - One endline
 - Weak buoy line
 - Additional headrope requirements
- Mixed species trap/pot fisheries
 - Minimum trawl length
 - One Endline
 - Weak buoy line
- Gear conflict; location marking alternatives
 - Trawls or gillnet sets with only one endline
- Team did not include tie-downs in their recommendations but discussed since they slightly reduce encounter risk

Recent North Atlantic Right Whale Entanglement Incidents

January 2023 Observed Right Whale Entanglement Incidents (last updated January 30, 2023)				
January 2023 sighting date	Identification	Location of 1st 2023 sighting	Last seen	Notes
Jan 8	#4904. 4yr old female	Offshore North Carolina	May 2022, Cape Cod Bay w/ no entanglement	Reportedly serious entanglement with significant trauma. Weather precluded response. Not resighted.
Jan 18	2yr old calf of #3720	Cape Cod Bay	August 2022 Canadian waters, entangled (previously seen w/o gear May 2022 Cape Cod Bay)	Fair condition but serious entanglement. Resighted Jan 22 but weather precluded response
Jan 20	#3812 Nimbus, 15yr old male	Offshore Jekyll Island Georgia	August 2022, Gulf of St. Lawrence, Canada w/o entanglement	Mouth only. Partial disentanglement; 375 ft of rope retrieved, some rope remaining. Whale in fair condition Preliminary id: Canadian
Jan 27	#1218 Argos >42yr old male	Offshore Surf City, North Carolina	May 2022 Great South Channel w/o entanglement	Tail wrap, evident trauma. Disentanglement, possibly fully. Rope and two traps retrieved and identified as Canadian (Nova Scotia) lobster gear

Updates on right whale incidents are posted [here](#).

Questions?

See fisheries.noaa.gov/ALWTRP for informational webinars and Team meeting summaries

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Recent East Coast Large Whale Incidents

Recent rapid rate of large whale mortalities, particularly in the Mid-Atlantic. ~18 since Dec. 1, 2022

- 11 stranded humpbacks (2 NY, 4 NJ, 1 MD, 1 VA, 3 NC)
- ~2 floating humpbacks (2 NJ)
- 3 sperm whales (1 NY, 1 NJ, 1 FL)
- 1 right whale calf (NC)
- 1 sei whale (NC)

Humpback strandings have been elevated since 2016, declared an [Unusual Mortality Event](#)

- 180 humpback strandings to date.
- Full or partial necropsies on half. 40% of those exhibited evidence of human interaction (vessel strike or entanglement)

Preliminary results of recent (18) large whale strandings:

- At least half necropsied
- Of those 3 humpbacks had signs of blunt force trauma
- Awaiting histology results

[Listen](#) to the teleconference on recent strandings or see the [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

For more information on the Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program, see their [webpage](#).