JUN _ 3 2009

REMINDER- FEDERAL AMERICAN LOBSTER
GEAR CONFIGURATION REQUIREMENTS

Dear Limited Access American Lobster Permit Holder:

This letter is a reminder to all vessels in possession of a Federal American lobster limited access permit fishing with traps, that all traps must be compliant with Federal American lobster gear configuration requirements.

Under Federal lobster regulations specified at 50 CFR 697, a lobster trap is defined as:

> "any structure or other device, other than a net, that is placed, or designed to be placed, on the ocean bottom and is designed for or is capable of, catching lobsters. Red crab fishing gear, fished deeper than 200 fathoms, and fishing gear fished by a vessel not issued a limited access lobster permit under §697.4(a), are gear deemed not to be lobster traps….."

Federal lobster vessels fishing with traps may - subject to existing state and Federal regulations - fish for and retain other species, such as Jonah crabs, with lobster trap gear, but any trap fished by a Federal lobster permit holder must be in compliance with all Federal lobster gear regulations. These lobster trap requirements include, but are not limited to a prohibition on: fishing trap gear in excess of the vessels' Federal lobster trap allocation; fishing traps without a valid lobster trap tag; fishing traps that do not meet current American lobster trap escape vent or ghost panel requirements; and fishing traps that do not meet current marine mammal gear configuration requirements.

You are encouraged to review current Federal American lobster regulations at the following webpage: http://www.nero.noaa.gov/StateFedOff/lobster/index.html, or by requesting a copy of Federal lobster regulations from the Northeast Region, State, Federal, and Constituent Programs Office at 978-281-9327.

Sincerely,
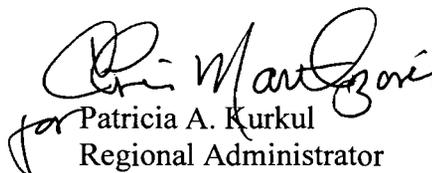
Patricia A. Kurkul
Regional Administrator