



United States Department of Commerce
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
Northeast Region
One Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930

Dear Limited Access Sea Scallop permit holder:

In response to changes in the sea scallop dredge fishery where vessels have begun using a modified scallop dredge aimed at preventing sea turtles from entering dredge gear, we have developed a new Vessel Trip Reporting (VTR) gear code. The new code is:

DSC – Dredge Scallop Chain Mat.

This new code will be required to be reported in block #8 Gear Fished on the VTR form when this gear is used. The instructions for other gear description information collected on the VTR (#9 mesh/ring size, #10 quantity of gear, and #11 size of gear) remain the same.

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service recently published proposed changes to Sea Scallop dredge gear that would require a "mat" across the dredge opening, made from both horizontal and vertical chains that are spaced widely enough to allow sea scallops to enter, but close enough to prevent turtles from entering the bags. The mats would be required on all sea scallop dredges used by federal permit holders fishing south of 41° 9.0' N. lat. from May 1 until November 30. The proposed rule was published in the Federal Register on May 27, 2005.

Information on this proposed rule can be found at:

<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/nero/regs/frdoc/proposed%20rule%20press%20release52705.pdf>

This new gear code will be effective regardless of any final rule published implementing the measures contained in the proposed rule.

If you have further questions about this matter or any Vessel Trip Reporting issue, contact the Northeast Vessel Trip Reporting Office at (978) 281-9246.

Sincerely

Gregory R. Power
Chief
Fisheries Information Section