



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
One Blackburn Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2298

Small Entity Compliance Guide

Dear Permit Holder:

This is to inform you that the Secretary of Commerce has approved an interim final rule in response to a Federal Court decision in the case of Conservation Law Foundation, et al. v. Evans, et al., in which the Court adopted a Settlement Agreement Among Certain Parties (Settlement Agreement). This is the second step in a three-step approach stipulated under the Settlement Agreement to reduce overfishing on regulated species managed under the Northeast (NE) Multispecies Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The measures contained in this interim final rule include revised regulated mesh areas (RMAs), revised closure areas, new gear restrictions, reductions in days-at-sea (DAS), and more restrictive recreational fishing measures. **The information contained in this letter pertains only to party/charter and private recreational fishing measures.** These measures are intended to remain **effective from August 1, 2002**, through the implementation of Amendment 13 to the FMP; which is to be implemented, according to the Settlement Agreement, no later than August 22, 2003.

NE Multispecies Recreational and Party/Charter Vessel Restrictions

All management measures in effect as of April 30, 2002, remain in effect unless otherwise changed by this interim final rule.

Size Limit Modification

This interim final rule increases the minimum size limit for cod and haddock to 23 inches total length for Party/Charter vessels not fishing on a NE multispecies DAS, and for all private recreational vessels.

Possession Limit Modification

This interim final rule implements the following possession limit restrictions:

For Party/Charter vessels:

- During April - November, no more than 10 cod and haddock combined, per person, per trip, when fishing any part of a trip in the Gulf of Maine (GOM) RMA.
- During December - March, no more than 10 cod and haddock combined, of which no more than 5 may be cod, per person, per trip, when fishing any part of a trip in the GOM RMA.

For private recreational vessels:

- During December - March, no more than 10 cod and haddock combined, of which no more than 5 may be cod, per person, per trip, when fishing any part of a trip in the GOM RMA.



Party/Charter Exemptions from GOM Closed Areas

This interim final rule modifies the current GOM Party/Charter closed area exemption program as follows:

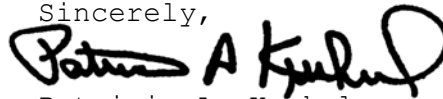
- To fish in the Western GOM and Cashes Ledge Closed Areas, vessels will be required to obtain a Letter of Authorization (LOA) from the Regional Administrator for the entire fishing year, beginning at the time the vessel enrolls in the program, through April 30.
- To fish in the GOM seasonal closure areas, vessels will be required to obtain a LOA from the Regional Administrator for a minimum of 3 months.

While participating in the GOM Party/Charter closed area exemption program, the vessel may not fish commercially for any species except tuna. A map of the revised RMAs is provided in Figure 1. Maps of the year-round and seasonal closed areas are provided in Figure 2.

This letter is only a summary of the regulations that have been implemented. To read these regulations in their entirety, you are encouraged to obtain a complete copy by calling (978) 281-9278, or by accessing the NE Regional Office web page. Up-to-date question and answer information is also available on the NE Regional Office web page at: <http://www.nero.nmfs.gov>.

This Small Entity Compliance Guide complies with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement and Fairness Act of 1996.

Sincerely,



Patricia A. Kurkul
Regional Administrator

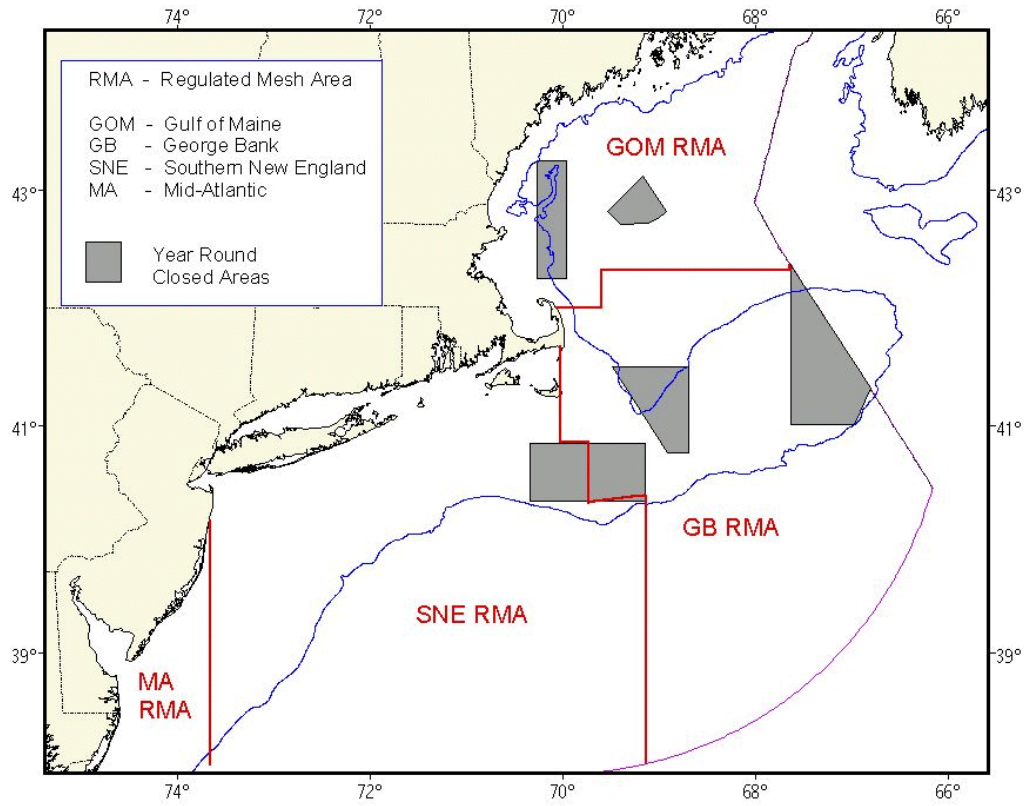


Figure 1. Regulated Mesh Areas

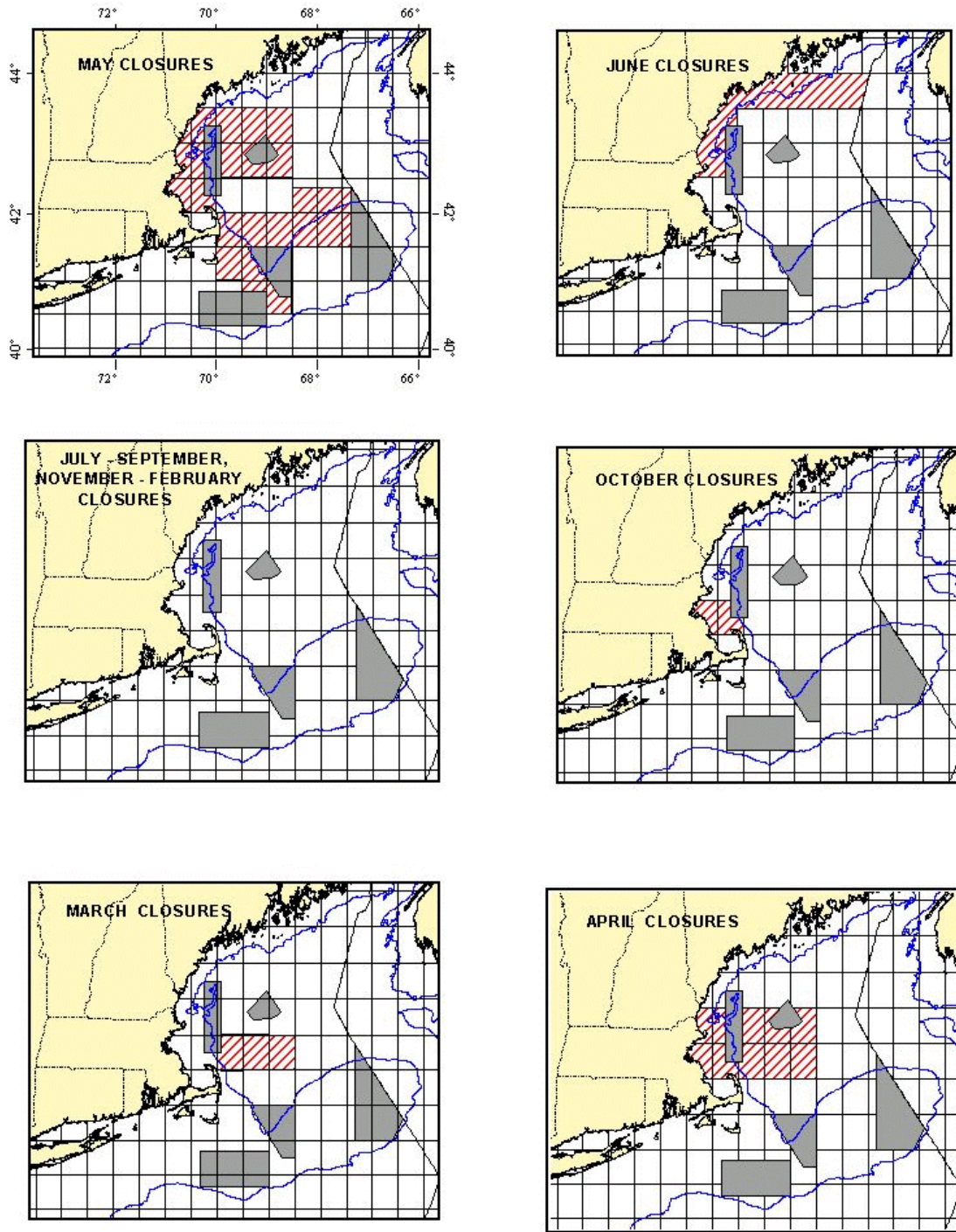


Figure 3. Rolling Closure Areas (including year-round closed areas indicated by shading)