



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

October 17, 2002

Dear Commercial Lobster Trap/Pot Fisherman:

This letter is to remind commercial lobster trap fishermen in Northern Inshore State Lobster Waters that one of the options on the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan's (ALWTRP) Lobster Take Reduction Technology List expires December 31, 2002. Earlier this year, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) sent a permit holder letter to commercial lobster trap fishermen on the recent amendments to the regulations implementing the ALWTRP. One of these amendments included a change to the Lobster Take Reduction Technology List which affects lobster trap fishermen in Northern Inshore State Lobster Waters. A detailed summary of the requirements for these waters is provided below.

Does this amendment to the Lobster Take Reduction Technology List apply to me?

This amendment applies to fishermen who use lobster trap/pot gear in the state waters of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine but does not include waters landward of the first bridge over any embayment, harbor, or inlet and waters landward of the following areas in Rhode Island: Sakonnet River, Narragansett Bay, Pt. Judith Pond Inlet, Ninigret Pond Inlet, Quonochontaug Pond Inlet, and Weekapaug Pond Inlet (see Figure 1 for Northern Inshore State Lobster Waters Area depiction).

What do I have to do to comply with this amendment?

Between now and December 31, 2002, fishermen with lobster trap gear in the Northern Inshore State Lobster Waters Area must be in compliance with one option out of Options 1-4 from the Lobster Take Reduction Technology List (see below). Starting January 1, 2003, fishermen must be in compliance with one option out of Options 1-3.

Lobster Take Reduction Technology List:

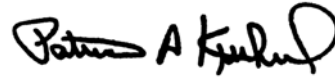
- Option 1. All buoy lines must be composed entirely of sinking and/or neutrally buoyant line.
- Option 2. All ground lines must be composed entirely of sinking and/or neutrally buoyant line.
- Option 3. All buoys must be attached to the buoy line with a weak link having a breaking strength no greater than 600 lbs (272.4 kg). Weak links may include swivels, plastic weak links, rope of the appropriate breaking strength, hog rings, rope stapled to a buoy stick, or devices approved in writing by the NOAA Fisheries Assistant Administrator. In addition, the bitter end of the buoy line must be clean and free of knots when the weak link breaks.
- Option 4. All buoy lines must be 7/16 in (1.11 cm) or less in diameter. **(Effective January 1, 2003, the Lobster Take Reduction Technology List will be amended to remove this option. Removing this option from the Lobster Take Reduction Technology List does not prevent a fisherman from continuing to use buoy line with a diameter of 7/16 in (1.11 cm) or less. However, it can not be counted as an option from this list.)**



Please note that lobster trap fishermen must also comply with the universal gear requirements, which include: 1) no wet storage of gear, 2) no floating line at the surface, and 3) fishermen are encouraged, but not required, to maintain knot-free buoy lines.

This letter only summarizes some of the requirements for Northern Inshore State Lobster Waters. To obtain the regulations in their entirety, please call 978-281-9328. In addition, these regulations are available by accessing the ALWTRP web page (www.nero.nmfs.gov/whaletrp/). If you have any questions regarding these regulations, please call 978-281-9328.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patricia A. Kurkul". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Patricia A. Kurkul
Regional Administrator

Enclosure

Figure 1

