



# Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan

## Compliance Guide for Commercial Fishers in Waters off of North Carolina Effective Immediately

A plan to reduce serious injuries and deaths of large whales due to accidental entanglement in fishing gear in the Atlantic

New Regulations Effective Spring 2002

### NOAA FISHERIES

#### Protected Resources Division

##### *Southeast Region*

9721 Executive Center Dr. N  
St. Petersburg, FL 33702

727-570-5312

Katie.Moore@noaa.gov

##### *Northeast Region*

One Blackburn Dr.  
Gloucester, MA 01930-2298

978-281-9145

Diane.Borggaard@noaa.gov

<http://www.nero.nmfs.gov/whaletrp>

#### Overview:

This compliance guide provides an overview of the regulations that implement the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP) which can affect North Carolina fishers.

A recent rule in 2002:

- Expands gear modifications to Mid-Atlantic and Offshore lobster waters,
- Amends the Lobster Take Reduction Technology List and the Gillnet Take Reduction Technology List; and
- Modifies requirements for gillnet gear in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Two other rules were also recently implemented. **These only affect waters north of the North Carolina/Virginia border:**

- *Dynamic Area Management (DAM) program:* Clarifies NOAA Fisheries' authority to temporarily restrict the use of lobster trap/pot and gillnet fishing gear within defined areas north of 40° N. latitude; and
- *Seasonal Area Management (SAM) program:* Defines times and areas from Cape Cod eastward to the Hague Line in which gear restrictions for lobster trap/pot and anchored gillnet gear are required.

#### Goal:

The rules provide further protection for large whales, with an emphasis on western North Atlantic right whales due to their critical population status. These rules are also needed to satisfy requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act.

#### *Who does this affect?*

Fishermen who use either lobster trap/pot gear in the Northern Inshore State Lobster Waters Area, Southern Nearshore Lobster Waters Area, or Offshore Lobster Waters Area; or gillnet gear in the Mid-Atlantic Coastal Waters Area.

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# Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan: Waters off North Carolina

## MID-ATLANTIC COASTAL GILLNET FISHERS:

In the Mid-Atlantic, fishers are now required to adhere to mandatory requirements which replace the Gillnet Take Reduction Technology List.

### Mid-Atlantic Drift Gillnet Fishers

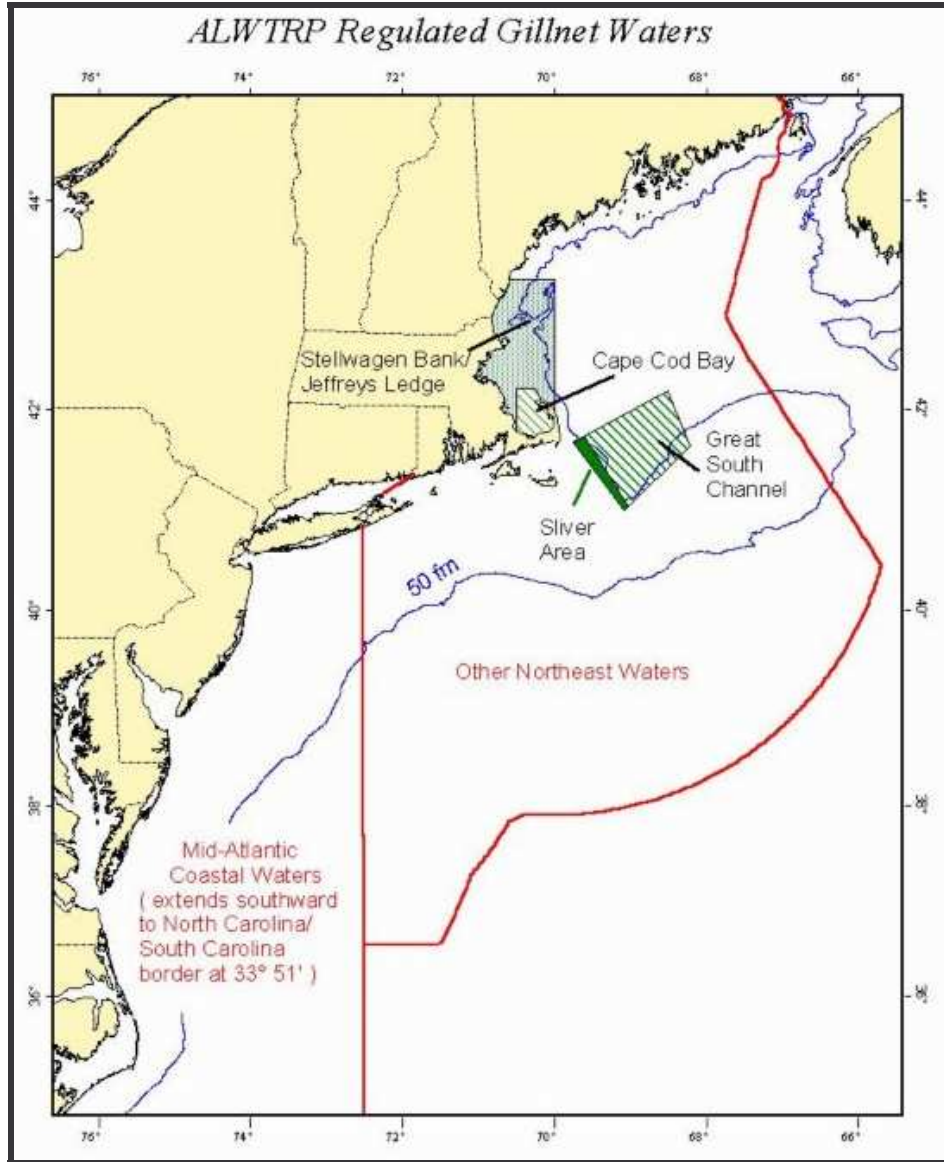
*From December 1 through March 31, annually:*

1. No fishing with driftnet gear at night unless that gear is tended; and
2. All driftnet gear set by a vessel must be removed from the water and stowed on board the vessel before returning to port.

### Mid-Atlantic Anchored Gillnet Fishers

*From December 1– March 31, annually fishers must:*

1. Install a weak link with a maximum breaking strength of no more than 1,100 lb (498.8 kg) on all buoys on the buoy line. Each weak link must be installed as close to each individual buoy as operationally feasible;
2. Install weak links in such a way that produces knotless ends if the weak link breaks the bitter end of the buoy line is clean and free of any knots;
3. Choose a weak link from the following list of approved gear: swivels, plastic weak links, rope of appropriate breaking strength, hog rings, rope stapled to a buoy stick, or devices approved in writing;
4. Install a weak link with a maximum breaking strength of no more than 1,100 lb (498.8 kg) in the center of the floatline of each 50-fathom (300-ft or 91.4-m) net panel in a net string, or every 25 fathom for longer panels;
5. Fishers must return all gillnet gear to port with their vessels or, if the gillnets are left at sea to continue fishing, secure the nets on each end with anchors that have the holding power of at least a 22 lb (9.9 kg) Danforth-style anchor;
6. No floating line (buoy line) is at the surface;
7. No wet storage of gear; and
8. Fishers are encouraged, but not required, to maintain knot-free buoy lines.



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## MID-ATLANTIC LOBSTER TRAP/POT FISHERS:

Fishermen now have mandatory gear modifications applicable year-round. These requirements replace the Lobster Take Reduction Technology List.

### Universal Requirements

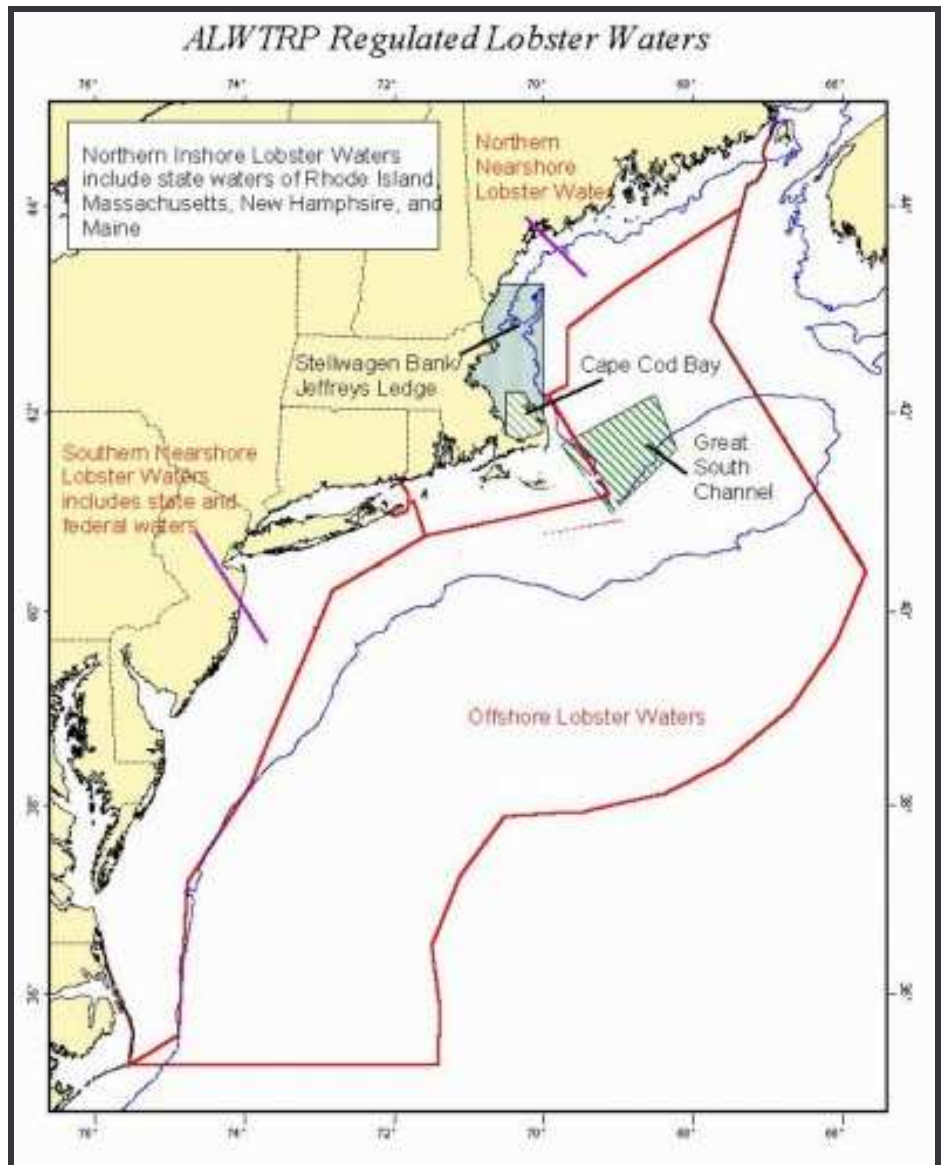
*At all times:*

1. Fishers are encouraged, but not required, to maintain the knot-free buoy lines;
2. No floating line (buoy line) is at the surface; and
3. No wet storage of gear.

### Southern Nearshore Lobster Waters Area ONLY

*At all times, lobster fishers must:*

1. Install a weak link with a maximum breaking strength of no more than 600 lb (272.2 kg) on all buoys on the buoy line. Each weak link must be installed as close to each individual buoy as operationally feasible;
2. Install weak links in such a way that produces knotless ends if the weak link breaks the bitter end of the buoy line is clean and free of any knots;
3. Choose a weak link from the following list of approved gear: swivels, plastic weak links, rope of appropriate strength, hog rings, or rope stapled to a buoy stick or devices approved in writing; and
4. Mark buoy lines (orange, 4" mark midway on the buoy line).



### Offshore Lobster Waters Area ONLY

*At all times, lobster fishers must:*

1. Install a weak link with a maximum breaking strength of no more than 2,000 lbs. (906.9 kg) on the buoy line. Each weak link must be installed as close to each individual buoy as operationally feasible;
2. Install weak links in such a way that produces knotless ends if the weak link breaks the bitter end of the buoy line is clean and free of any knots;
3. Choose a weak link from the following list of approved gear: swivels, plastic weak links, rope of appropriate strength, hog rings, or rope stapled to a buoy stick or devices approved in writing; and
4. Mark buoy lines (black, 4" mark midway on the buoy line).

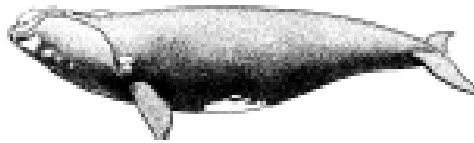
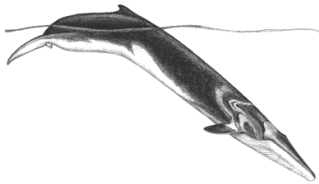
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## Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan: Waters off North Carolina

NOAA Fisheries is providing this information to all active 2002 North Carolina Standard Commercial Fishing and Retired Commercial Fishing License holders. Please disregard this notice if you are not a gillnet or lobster pot/trap fisher.

This summary is intended as a guide to measures required under the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan. This document is not the legal document detailing the regulations. Interested and affected parties can find the regulations at 50 CFR 229.32 or at the whale plan website.



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National Marine Fisheries Service  
Southeast Regional Office, F/SER3  
9721 Executive Center Drive North  
St. Petersburg FL 33702

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# Compliance Guide for Commercial Fishers in NC