



Greater Atlantic Region Bulletin

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<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/whaletrp>
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Trap/Pot and Gillnet Fishermen Final Rule for Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan *Notice*

NOAA’s Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a Final Rule amending the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (Plan). NMFS implemented the Plan to reduce the risk of entanglement and serious injuries and deaths of large whales (North Atlantic right, humpback, and fin) should incidental entanglement in fishing gear occur. The Plan is an evolving plan that changes as NMFS learns more about why whales become entangled and how fishing practices might be modified to reduce the risk of entanglement. In response to the continued serious injury and mortality of large whales from entanglement in vertical lines (or buoy lines) of commercial fishing gear, NMFS determined that additional modifications to the Plan are warranted. These new measures are intended to reduce the risk of vertical line entanglements in areas and times where abundance of large whales and high trap/pot gear density overlap.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the new requirements in the Northeast?	In the Northeast, we are requiring a minimum number of traps per trawl based on area fished and miles fished from shore to reduce the number of buoy lines in the water column. We are implementing a seasonal closure for all trap/pot fisheries in the Massachusetts Restricted Area: Cape Cod Bay and Outer Cape (Jan 1 to April 30). We are also increasing the size and frequency of the current gear marking scheme for both trap/pot and gillnet fisheries.
What are the new requirements in the Mid-Atlantic?	In the Mid-Atlantic, we are increasing the size and frequency of the current gear marking scheme for both trap/pot and gillnet fisheries.
What are the new requirements in the Southeast?	In the Southeast, we are using the current Southeast Restricted Area North to establish gear setting requirements for buoy line breaking strength and reducing the weak link strength in trap/pot fisheries; requiring all buoy lines to be made of sinking rope and object free in trap/pot fisheries; requiring a single trap per buoy line; and in federal waters requiring that trap/pot gear be brought back to shore at the end of each trip. We are also increasing the size and frequency of the current gear marking scheme for both trap/pot and gillnet fisheries.

For small entity compliance guides, this bulletin complies with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement and Fairness Act of 1996. This notice is authorized by the Regional Administrator of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Region.

What are the new gear marking requirements?	Trap/pot and gillnet buoy lines must be marked three times (top, middle, bottom) with three 12” marks. The current color requirements remain the same.
Who developed these requirements?	Requirements were developed with input from the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team, which is a multi-stakeholder team that includes fishermen, state managers, gear specialists, non-government organizations and scientists. We used input gathered from the public during the 16 public hearings and 60 day public comment period during the proposed rule phase.
When do these requirements go into effect?	The gear marking and gear modification requirements in the mid-Atlantic are effective August 26, 2014, in the Southeast on November 1, 2014, and in the Northeast on June 1, 2015. The Massachusetts Restricted Area closure is in effect on January 1, 2015.
Where can I get more information about the requirements?	Outreach guides are available online (http://www.nero.noaa.gov/protected/whaletrp) or by calling the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office Protected Resources Division (978) 281-9328.
Who can I call if I have questions?	The Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office Protected Resources Division: (978) 281-9328 John Higgins, Northeast Fisheries Liaison: (207) 677-2316 Glenn Salvador, Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Liaison: (757) 414-0128