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FISHERIES**

Office of Protected
Resources

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Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan Update

Conservation measures to address entanglement risks
from commercial trap/pot and gillnet fishing gear

Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team

- Established in 1996 under MMPA
 - **Purpose:** to develop a take reduction plan for reducing the incidental take of right whales, humpback whales, fin whales and minke whales in commercial trap/pot and gillnet gear in U.S. waters from Maine to Florida
 - **Goal:** reduce serious injuries and mortalities to $< \text{PBR}$ (PBR=0 for Right Whales at that time)

Team Membership

Group	Number
Trap/Pot Industry	18
Gillnet Industry	5*
Conservation/Environmental	6
Academic/Scientific	9
State Managers	14
Federal Managers	5
Fishery Mgmt Organizations	4
Total	61

* Some trap/pot member represent gillnet as well

July 22, 1997

- Establish TRP
- Weaklink requirements
- Effective November 15, 1997

January 9, 2002

- Establish SAM and DAM program
- DAM effective February 8, 2002
- SAM effective March 2002

October 5, 2007

- Expand weaklink requirements
- Implement sinking groundline requirements
- Effective April 2009
- Replaced SAM and DAM program

December 12, 2014

- Modification to time/area of closure area
- Effective immediately

December 2000

- Gear marking requirements
- Effective February 2001

June 25, 2007

- Seasonal gillnet closures in Southeast
- Effective July 2007

June 27, 2014

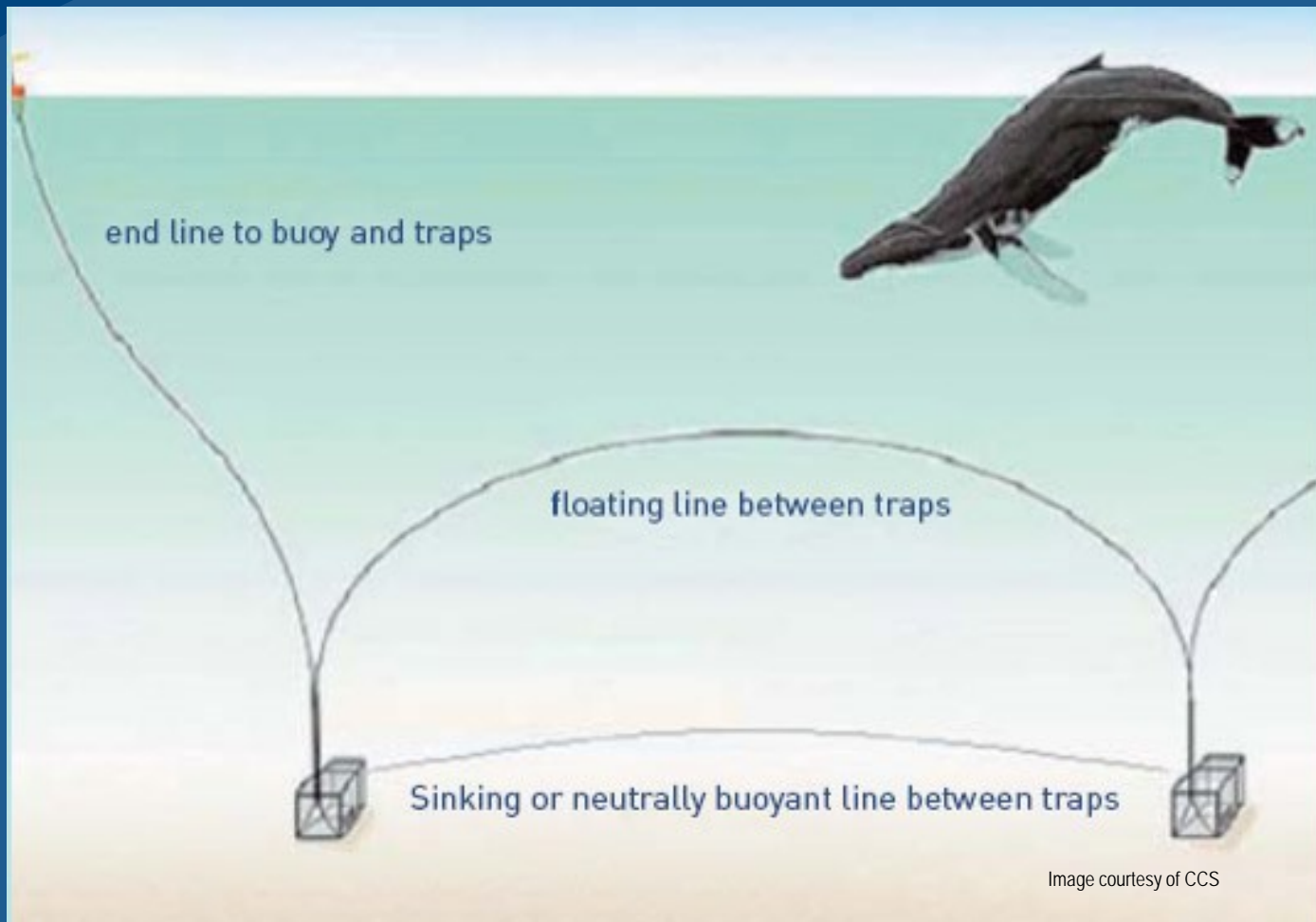
- Vertical line rule
- Additional gear marking requirements
- Effective June 2015

May 28, 2015

- Modification to vertical line rule. Effective immediately
- Additional gear marking requirements

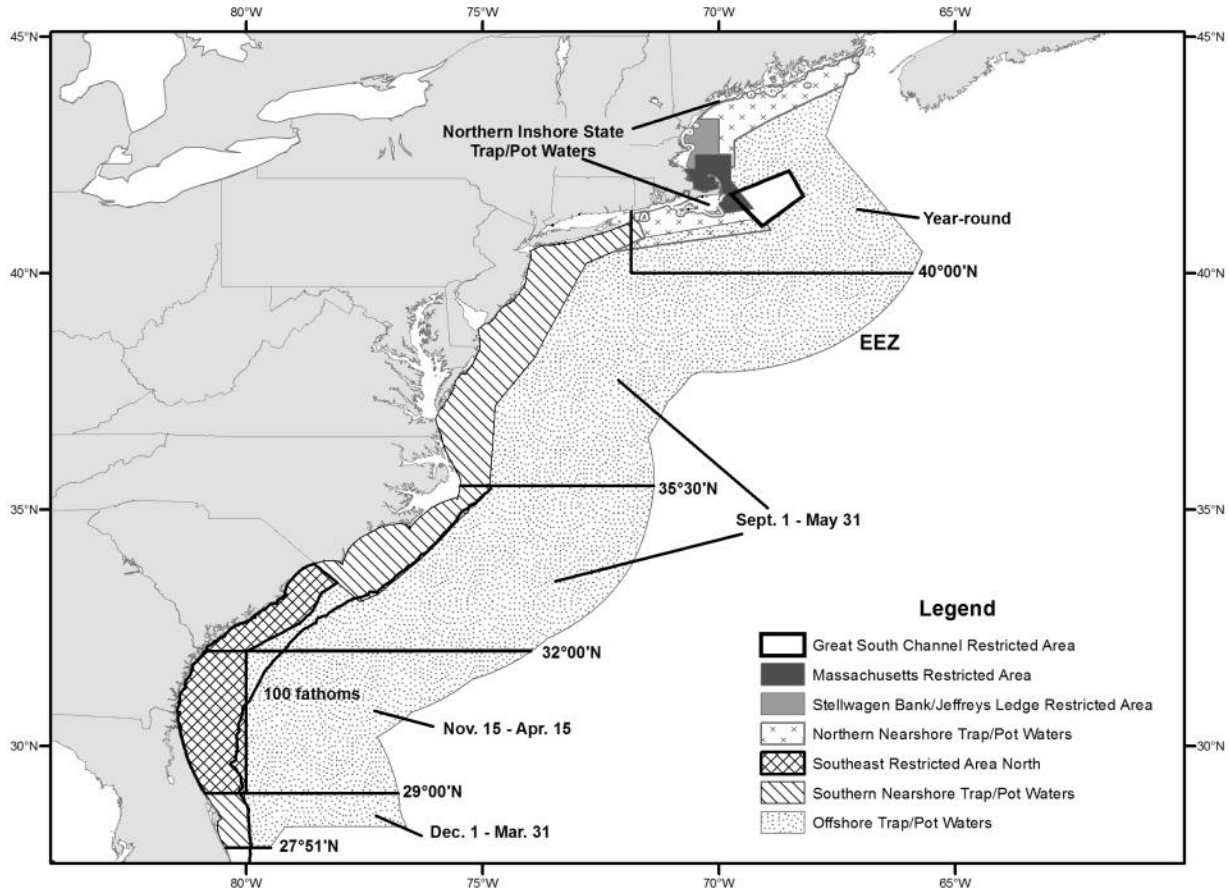


Entanglements



Sinking Groundline Rule

- At the 2003 ALWTRT meeting, by consensus, the ALWTRT agreed to two overarching principles associated with reducing large whale entanglement risks:
 - Reducing entanglement risks associated with groundlines in commercial trap/pot gear; and
 - Reducing entanglement risks associated with vertical lines (endlines or buoy lines) in commercial trap/pot and gillnet gear.
- The ALWTRT agreed to focus first on addressing the groundline entanglement risk.
- NMFS embarked on a rather lengthy rule development process that ultimately led to the implementation of a sinking groundline requirements for all trap/pot fisheries throughout the entire east coast.
 - This requirement was approved in October 2007 and became effective in April 2009.



Vertical Line Rule Development

Objectives:

- Use a different approach than how the sinking groundline rule was developed.
- The approach for the vertical line rule addresses the data limitations encountered during the development of the sinking groundline rule and focuses the vertical line management scheme to smaller, high impact areas versus wide-scale, broad management.

Goals:

- Develop management options to reduce the risk of vertical line entanglements in places where it will have the most impact rather than applying broad blanket reductions all along the entire East coast.
- To be fully informed as early on in the process as possible on the economic impacts associated with any vertical line management strategy.

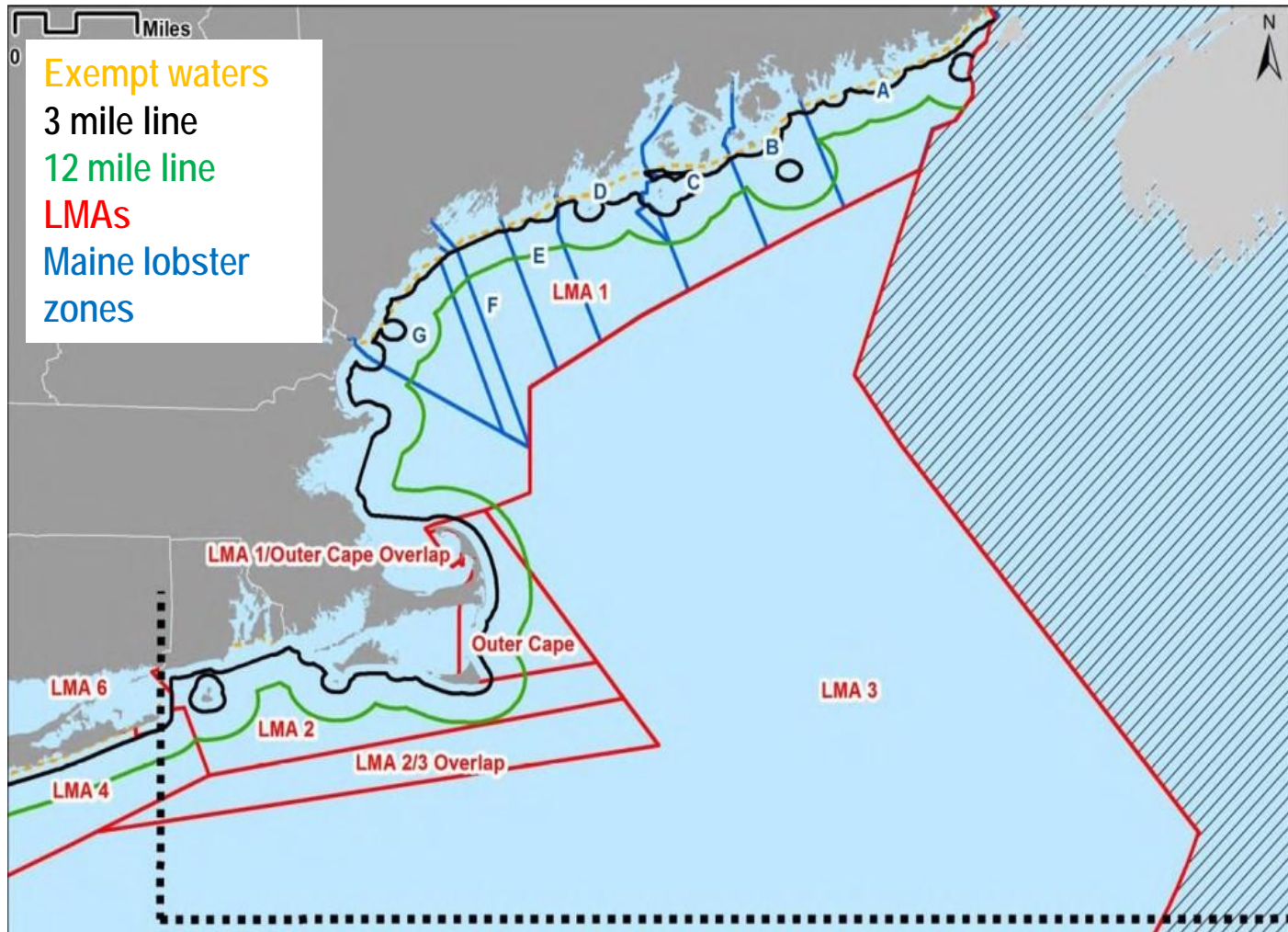
Analytical Approach:

- Sightings per unit effort overlaid on;
- Gear Characterization information;
- This approach allows the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team to consider several vertical line management strategies (gear density, whale density, co-occurrence).

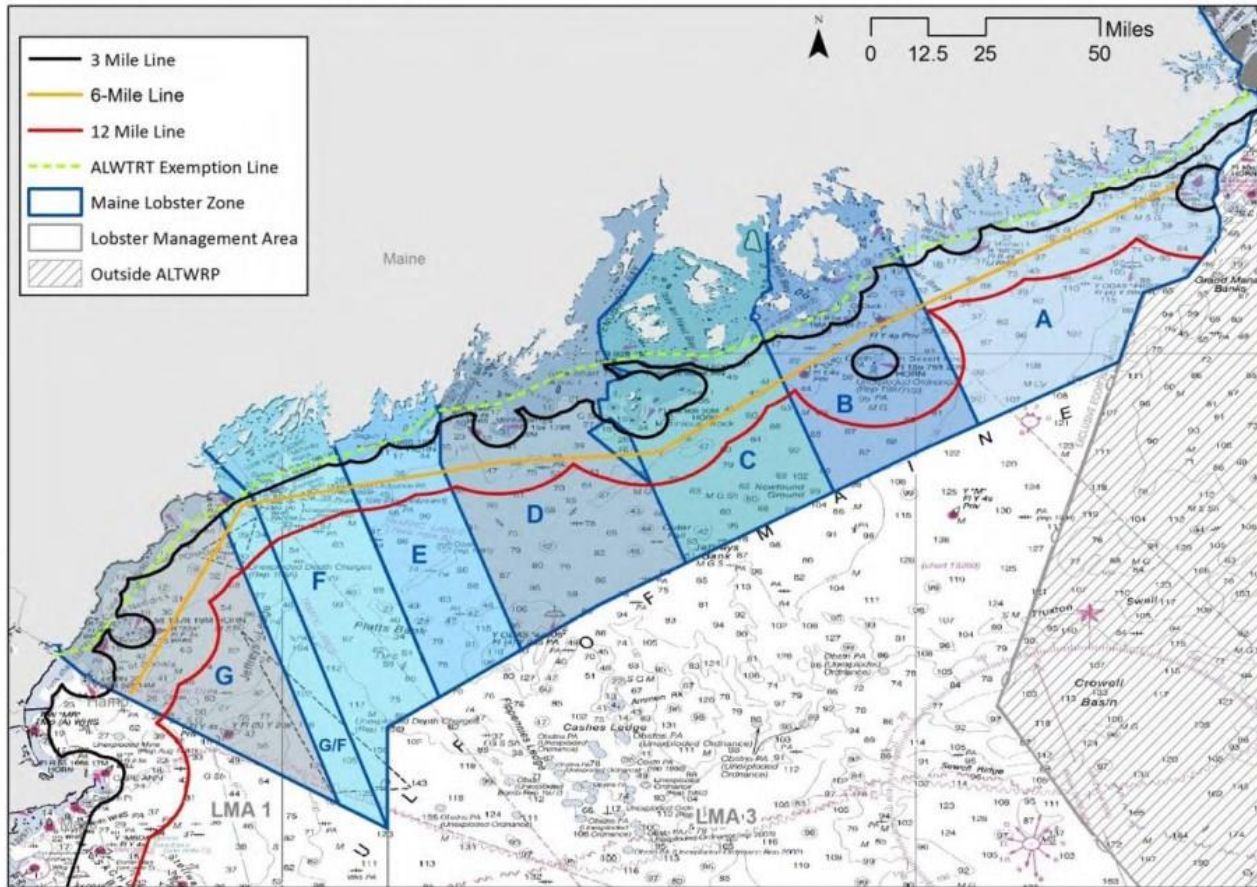


Vertical Line Rule

- Final Rule Published in June 2014
- Combination of NMFS, States, Conservationist, and Scientist proposals:
 - Increase the number of traps per trawl based on area fished and miles fished from shore [(0-3), (3-12), (12+)] and [(0-3), (3-6), (6-12)(12+)]
 - Closure: Created the MA Bay Restricted Area to be closed February 1 – April 30 to trap/pot fisheries (Amended December 2014)
 - Some exemptions to the minimum number of traps per trawl
 - ¼ mile buffer from shore around islands (Monhegan, Matinicus, Ragged Islands).
 - New Hampshire state waters
 - In SER require single pots/traps, weaker weak links and breaking strength of vertical lines
 - More robust gear marking program coast wide and monitoring in the Mid-Atlantic.



Maine State and Federal Nearshore Waters



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INDUSTRIAL ECONOMICS, INCORPORATED

Draft for Internal Use Only
Prepared for the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team

Created: April 6, 2011

Lines removed from water column

- In 2009 we required converting 27,000 miles of floating groundline to sinking groundline
- In 2015 we required removing 2,740 miles of vertical line

Enough line to encircle Earth 1.2 times



Trap/Pot and Gillnet Closure areas

31,916 TOTAL SQ MILES of seasonal closures

MA Restricted Area (trap/pot, Feb-April)

- 3,073 sq mile

Great South Channel (trap/pot and gillnet, April-June)

- 3,232 sq mile

Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area (gillnet, Jan-May)

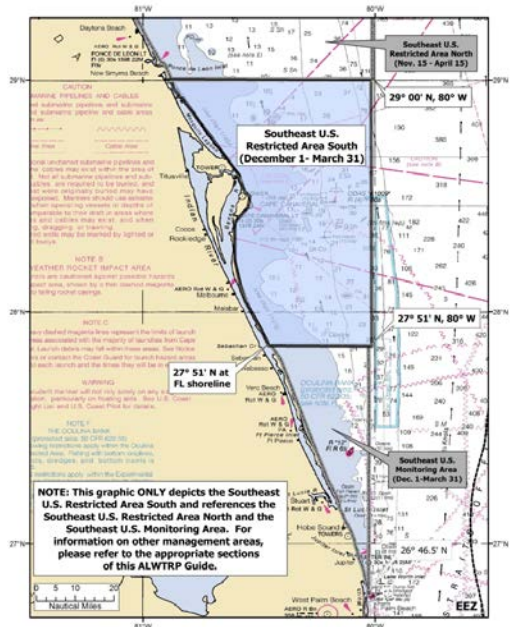
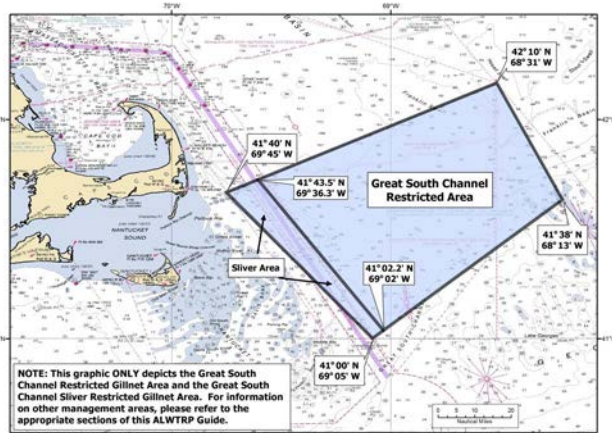
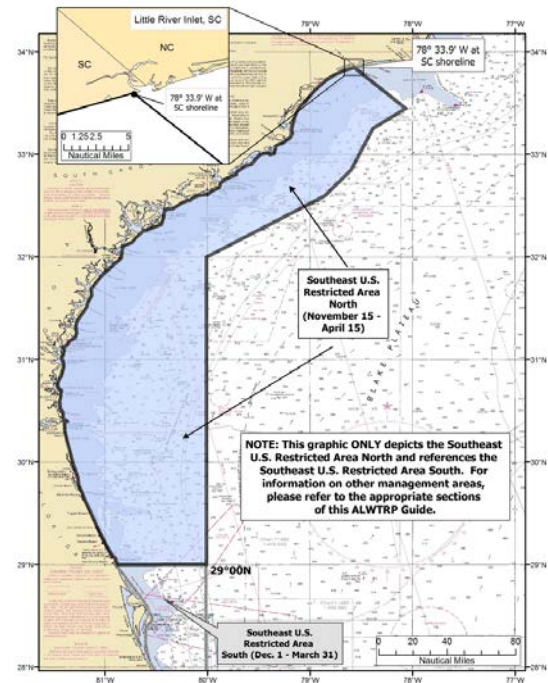
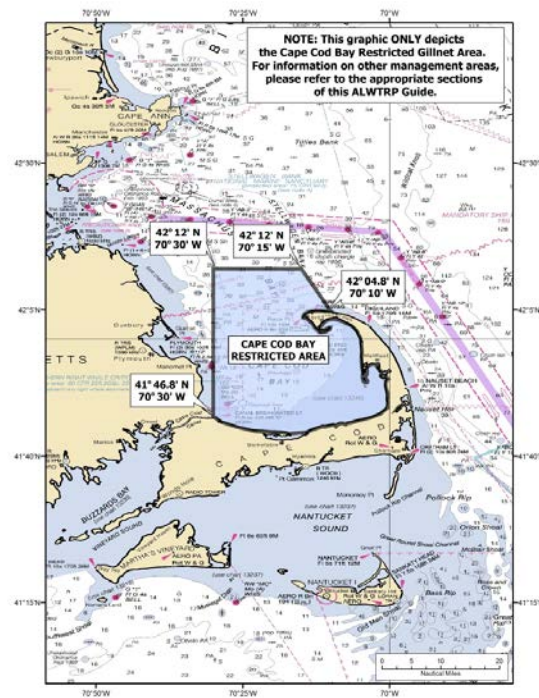
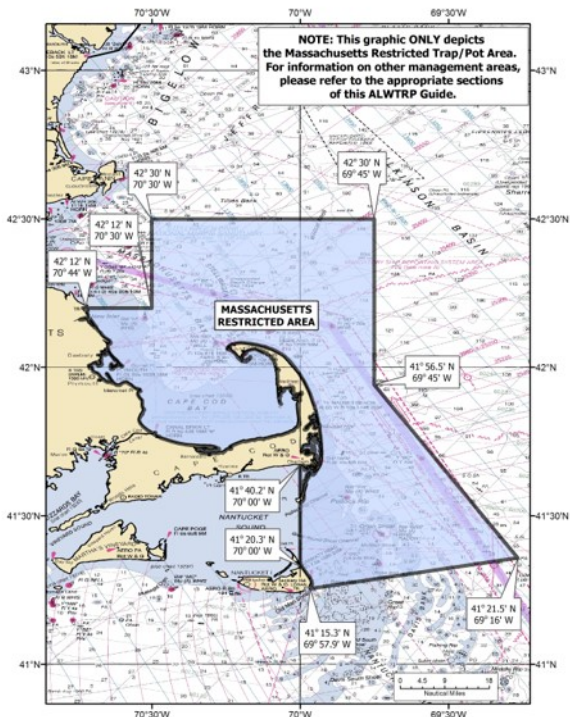
- 664 sq mile

Southeast Restricted Area North (gillnet, Nov 15- April 15)

- 21,996 sq mile

Southeast Restricted Area South (gillnet, Dec-March)

- 2,951 sq mile



Weak Links and Gear Marking

- Weak links are required coastwide



- Gear marking is required coastwide
 - Including two areas of importance for right whales with specific marks (Jordan and Jeffreys)
 - 4008 vessels are required to gear mark with three 12" marks

Current ALWTRP Status

- Continue to monitor the plan according to Monitoring Strategy
 - Monitor large whale abundance
 - Monitor large whale serious injury and mortality
 - Monitor compliance and enforcement of regulations
 - Continue training and coordination efforts with enforcement partners
 - Annual webinars
 - Full TRT meetings as needed.

Current ALWTRP Status

- In-Person Meeting in April
 - Provide the TRT with the latest information regarding right whale and humpback whale abundance
 - Provide the TRT with detailed information surrounding entanglement events since 2014
 - Discuss implications of recent findings and the need for future action
 - Discuss recent research on gear modifications
 - Discuss future plans for co-occurrence model
 - Review exemption request from the MA Restricted Area

Challenges

- Lack of data of where/how large whale entanglements are occurring
- Inability to determine source of entanglement (gear type, fishery, location, time, country of origin)
- Inability to use preliminary data to support decisions
- Lack of analysis to determine effectiveness of Take Reduction Plan regulations
- Enforcement of current regulations
- Maintaining active and engaged Team members
 - Members becoming disenchanted with TRT process
 - Lack of consensus recommendations
- Limited success in neighboring countries addressing entanglement issue
- Industry perception that they are being blamed for all fishery entanglement
- Industry perception that we have no end goal in sight
- Limitations on TRT meetings (face-to-face versus webinars & travel restrictions)

Thank You

