

Massachusetts Recreational Lobstering and Crabbing Guide



Division of Marine Fisheries

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Marine Fisheries

A Commonwealth of Massachusetts Agency

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Every effort has been made to ensure that the contents of this document are accurate and fully updated as of the month indicated. However, in the event these summaries may differ in any way from the official rules codified at 322 Code of Massachusetts Regulations by the Massachusetts Secretary of State’s Office, or the official statutes codified in Chapter 130 of the Massachusetts General Laws, then the later versions shall apply.

Contact Information

The Division of Marine Fisheries is responsible for the management of the Commonwealths living marine resources. The Division promotes and develops commercial and recreational fisheries through research, technical assistance, and the collection of statistics. For further information contact the Division Lobster Biologists.

Division of Marine Fisheries Lobster Biologists

Boston Office

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(617) 626-1520
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South Coast Office

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New Bedford, MA 02740
(508) 990-2860
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Gloucester, MA 01930
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P. O. Box 68
Vineyard Haven,MA 02568
(508) 693-4372
FAX: (508) 693-4157

Office of Law Enforcement

Environmental Police Officers are responsible for enforcing Massachusetts fish and game laws including the commercial and recreational harvest of living marine resources. In addition they also enforce the Commonwealth's boating and recreational vehicle laws and regulations. Fishing violations can be reported to one of the following numbers:

- South Coast Bureau, Hewitts Cove.....(617) 727-0882
- Radio Room(617) 727-6398
- North Coastal Bureau.....(978) 283-7764
- Toll free Number.....1-800-632-8075

Non-Commercial Lobster/Crabbing Permit

Who Can Get One?

- A) **U.S. Citizens and residents of the Commonwealth**
 - 1. Parental consent is needed if the child is under 17 years old
- B) **U.S. Citizens and non-residents of the Commonwealth who:**
 - 1. Temporarily reside in any coastal city or town of the Commonwealth, and...
 - 2. Own more than \$5,000 in real estate within the Commonwealth as determined by tax records
- C) **Non-U.S. Citizens who are not residents of the Commonwealth shall:**
 - 1. Provide a copy of the alien registration receipt card issued by the U.S. Dept. of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service to the applicant, and...
 - 2. Temporarily reside in any coastal city or town of the Commonwealth, and...
 - 3. Own more than \$5,000 in real estate within the Commonwealth as determined by tax records
- D) **Non-U.S. Citizens who are residents of the Commonwealth shall:**
 - 1. Provide a copy of applicant's alien registration receipt card issued by the U.S. Dept. of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service.

What Does It Cost?

\$40 for residents of the Commonwealth

\$60 for all non-residents

Can I Sell My Lobsters?

No. A Non-Commercial Lobster/Crabbing Permit **DOES NOT** allow you to sell your catch. You must obtain a Commercial Lobster/Crabbing Permit if you wish to sell your catch.

Where Can I Get A Permit?

You can purchase a Non-Commercial Lobster/Crabbing Permit at any MA Division of Marine Fisheries business office

or

IF YOU ARE A MASSACHUSETTS RESIDENT YOU MAY PURCHASE/RENEW YOUR NON-COMMERCIAL LOBSTER/CRABBING PERMIT ONLINE*

*(certain restrictions apply)

Please log onto:

WWW.SPORT.STATE.MA.US

And follow the step by step instructions for purchasing a Non-Commercial Lobster/Crabbing permit.

How many Lobsters And Crabs Can I Take?

There is a limit of **15 lobsters** per day per permit, and all lobster must meet the legal requirements. There is a limit of **25 Blue Crabs** per day and a total limit of **50 crabs** per day for all other edible crab species.

Who Can Use The Permit?

A Non-Commercial Lobster/Crabbing Permit authorizes the holder and members of the holders' **immediate family**, residing in the same residence, to fish for and take lobsters and edible crabs using 10-pots only. The immediate family is defined as the **spouse, parents, children, grandparents, brothers and sisters** of the holder.

This permit may be endorsed for diving for the permit holder only. Other family members may purchase additional permits for diving only.

Only **ONE** Non-Commercial Lobster/Crabbing Permit endorsed for 10 pots is allowed per family/household.

For What Options Can The Permit Be Endorsed?

When you purchase your Non-Commercial Lobster/Crabbing Permit you must specify if you want it endorsed for the use of 10 pots or for diving. Your permit can be endorsed for both practices if you prefer.

Where Can Traps Be Set?

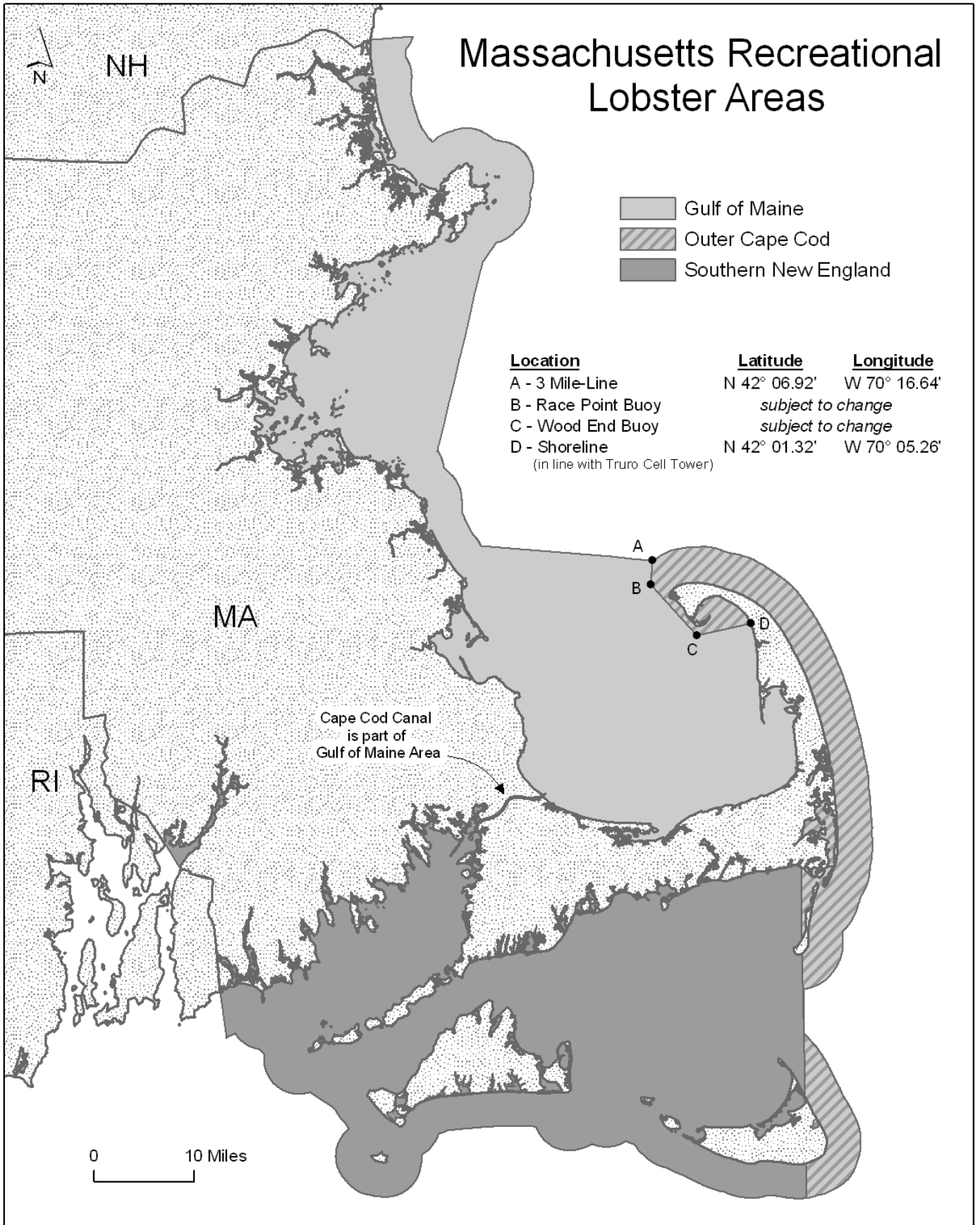
Non-Commercial Lobster/Crabbing Permit allow you to place your traps and/or dive for lobsters in designated recreational lobster areas. Please refer to the chart on page 3.




Also, no buoyed traps may be set in the Cape Cod Canal. New Bedford Harbor is closed to lobster harvest north of a line from Ricketson's Point (Dartmouth) to Wilbur Point (Fairhaven).

Annual Catch Reports

Annual catch reports are required of all Non-Commercial Lobster/Crabbing Permit holders. These forms are provided by DMF at the time of renewal. Renewal licenses will not be issued until a catch report has been filed.

Massachusetts Recreational Lobster Areas



-  Gulf of Maine
-  Outer Cape Cod
-  Southern New England

<u>Location</u>	<u>Latitude</u>	<u>Longitude</u>
A - 3 Mile-Line	N 42° 06.92'	W 70° 16.64'
B - Race Point Buoy	<i>subject to change</i>	
C - Wood End Buoy	<i>subject to change</i>	
D - Shoreline (in line with Truro Cell Tower)	N 42° 01.32'	W 70° 05.26'

Non-Commercial Regulations By Area

Recreational Lobster Regulations			
	Gulf of Maine Recreational Lobster Area	Outer Cape Cod Recreational Lobster Area	Southern New England Recreational Lobster Area
Min size	3 1/4"	3 3/8"	3 3/8"
Max size	5 "	--	5 1/4"
V-Notched Females --- Definitions <small>(more inform. - page 9)</small>	"Zero-Tolerance": <u>Illegal to harvest</u> females with V-shaped notch of any size with or without setal hairs	<u>Illegal to harvest</u> female with notch or indentation in base of the flipper at least 1/4" deep and tapering to sharp point without setal hairs	<u>Illegal to harvest</u> female with notch or indentation in base of the flipper at least 1/8" deep and tapering to a sharp point with or without setal hairs
Trap Limit	10 Traps	10 Traps	10 Traps
Escape Vent	1 15/16" x 5 3/4" or two circular vents of 2 7/16"	2" x 5 3/4" or two circular vents of 2 5/8"	2" x 5 3/4" or two circular vents of 2 5/8"
Bag Limit	15 per day	15 per day	15 per day

Taking lobster at night

Lobster may only be harvested from 1/2 hour before sunrise to 1/2 hour after sunset.

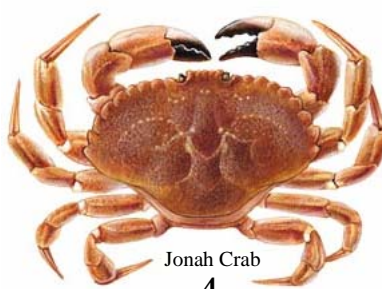
Egg-Bearing Females

It is unlawful to take or possess any egg-bearing female lobster. It is unlawful to land or possess any lobster:

1. from which eggs have been removed, or...
2. that has come in contact with any substance capable of removing lobster eggs.

Recreational Crab Regulations

Species	Minimum Size	Other Regulations
Blue Crab	5" shell width (spine to spine)	egg bearers cannot be taken; 25 crabs/day; no permit required unless using traps or SCUBA; closed season is 1/1 - 4/30, inclusive
Other Edible Crab (excludes Green Crabs)	none	Same as above but with a 50 crab/day limit



How To Measure a Lobster

The Rules

Lobsters must be measured with a special gauge to make sure that they are "keepers."

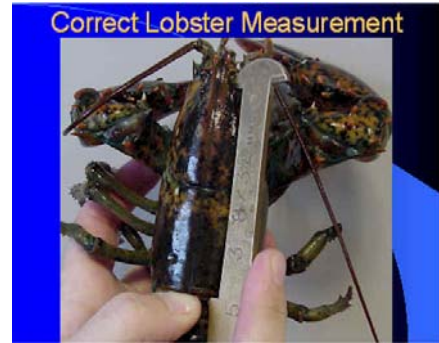
The carapace length is measured from the **rear of the eye socket to the rear of the bodyshell (or carapace) on a line parallel to the center line of the bodyshell**.

All lobsters measuring less than the minimum legal carapace length, or larger than the maximum legal carapace length, must be immediately returned to the waters from which taken.

All lobsters must be measured immediately.

Mutilation

It shall be unlawful to possess any lobster, or part thereof, which is mutilated in a manner which makes accurate measurement impossible.



Note: A common error made by novices is to measure over the rostrum or horn located above the eye socket. Make certain that your measure is in the extreme rear of the eye socket and below the horn.

How To Measure a Blue Crab

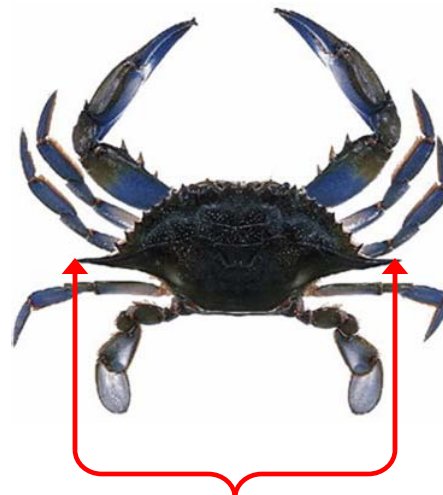
The Rules

Blue crabs must be measured with a special gauge to make sure that they are "keepers." Check your local fishing supply store or Town Conservation Department for availability.

The legal carapace width is 5 inches and is measured from the tip of one lateral spine to the tip of the other lateral spine across the back of the crab.

All blue crabs measuring less than the minimum legal carapace width must be immediately returned to the waters from which taken.

All blue crabs must be measured immediately.



5 inches

SCUBA Regulations for Recreational Lobster/Crabbing

Permits and Conditions

A Non-Commercial Lobster/Crabbing Permit endorsed for diving is required of **all** individuals who recreationally dive for lobsters or crabs in coastal waters.

No permit is required to take edible crabs (including blue crabs) for use by immediate family if dip-netting or using "star" traps, provided that the number of blue crabs does not exceed twenty-five (25) in one day, or fifty (50) total in one day for other edible crabs, and that no 6-sided pots or traps are used.

Gear Marking

Divers must display their assigned permit number upon their tank and a floating marker (upright single panel at least 12" x 12", white background, black numerals at least 3" high, ½" in thickness or width of line on both sides of the marker). A group of divers may use only one floating marker listing the permit number of **EACH** diver in the group.

Catch Limits

There is a limit of **15 lobsters** per day per permit, and all lobsters must meet the legal requirements.

Taking of Blue crabs and other edible crabs is prohibited from January 1 through April 30.

There is a limit of **25 blue crabs** per day.

There is a combined limit of **50 Jonah or rock crabs per day for persons without a permit.**

Common Questions

I have a 10-pot Non-commercial permit, is it automatically endorsed for diving?

No. You must specify that you would like your permit to be endorsed for diving. There is no extra charge for this.

Does everyone in my dive group need a permit for taking lobster?

Yes. Each individual diver who intends to take lobster or crabs needs an individual permit. If diving in a group, each individual's permit number must be displayed on their tanks and on the surface floatation.

Does my diving permit cover the immediate members of my family as well?

No, diver permits are for the individual diver only.

Gear Requirements

Every diver or group of divers, while swimming on or below the surface of the waters of the Commonwealth, is required by Massachusetts General Law to display a dive flag.



Flag must be at least twelve inches by fifteen inches in area of red background with a white diagonal stripe.

The dive flag must be displayed on a boat or surface float.

It must extend at least 3 feet from the surface of the water.

Divers shall remain in an area within one hundred feet of such displayed diver's flag while at or near the surface of the water.

Methods of Taking Lobsters and Crabs

Not Allowed: Massachusetts General Law prohibits the taking of lobsters by spearing, dipping, or dragging.

Spearing – the use of a spear gun, pole spear, or any other object that may be used to pierce the shell of the lobster as a means of harvest.

Dipping - the use of a dip net.

Dragging - the use of mobile or hauled nets or dredges.

Allowed: Harvesting of lobster by hand, or the use of an angled "tickle stick", which is a straight or slightly bent stick used to agitate a lobster into coming out of the hole.

All About Lobster

What are they?

Lobsters are ten-legged (decapod) crustaceans. The American lobster is the only species of clawed lobster in the Northwestern Atlantic region.

Where are they?

The American lobster is distributed throughout the Northwest Atlantic from the Straights of Bell Isle, Newfoundland to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina.

They are most abundant in coastal zones at depths of less than 150 ft. (~50 m).

The greatest abundance of lobster occurs within the Gulf of Maine– from mid-coast Maine to Southwest Nova Scotia.



Growth

American lobster is a long-lived species known to reach more than 40 lbs. (18 kg).

Age is unknown because all hard parts are shed and replaced at molting, leaving no accreting material for age determination. In Massachusetts, shedding typically occurs between June and October.

Lobsters at minimum legal size are generally considered to be between 5 and 7 years of age based on hatchery observations.

Maximum age is generally considered between 30 and 40 years.

Biology

Fertilized eggs are carried on the female abdomen for a 9 to 12 month period of development prior to hatching.

Female lobster carry between 1000 and > 100,000 eggs depending on the size of the female.

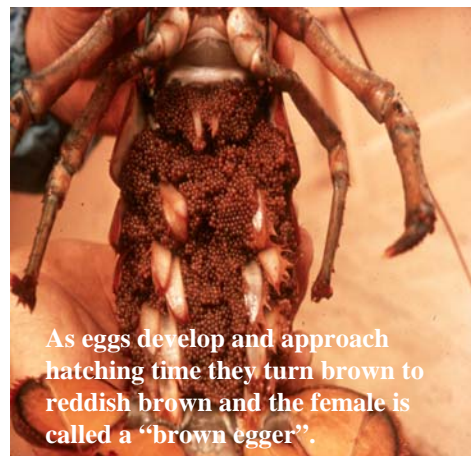
Hatching typically occurs over a 4 month period from May through September. In Massachusetts we typically see peak hatching from late-June through early- July.

Egg-Bearing Females

It is unlawful for any fisherman to take or possess any egg-bearing female lobster or female lobster with the egg mass removed, at any time.



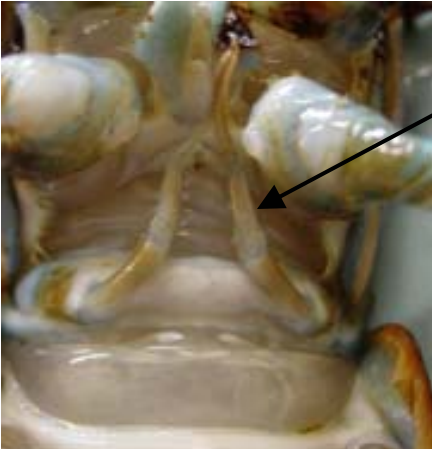
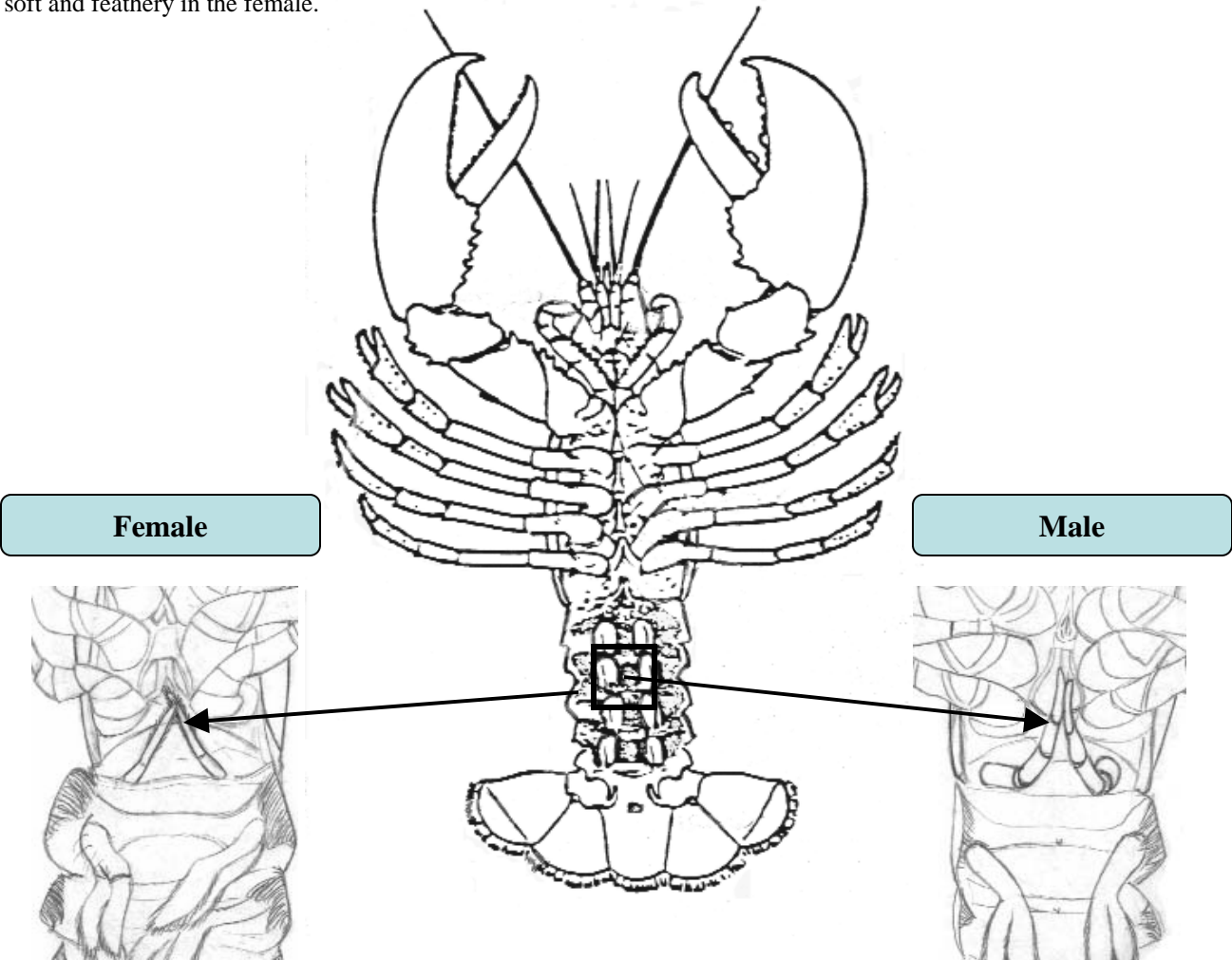
When eggs are extruded they are dark green and the female is called a "green egger".



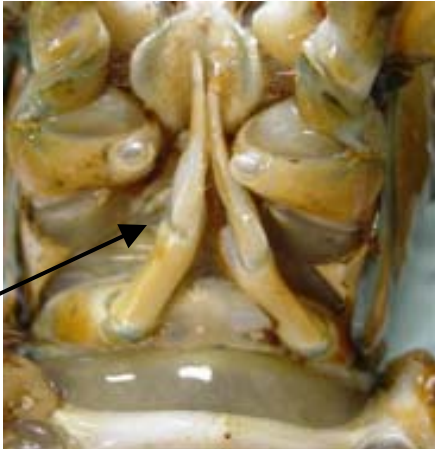
As eggs develop and approach hatching time they turn brown to reddish brown and the female is called a "brown egger".

Is it Male or Female?

In order to determine the sex of a lobster, you must look at the first pair of appendages under the tail, called swimmerets. They are positioned near the base of the last pair of walking legs. The first pair of swimmerets are hard in the male, and soft and feathery in the female.



The 1st pair of swimmerets on females are soft



The 1st pair of swimmerets on males are hard

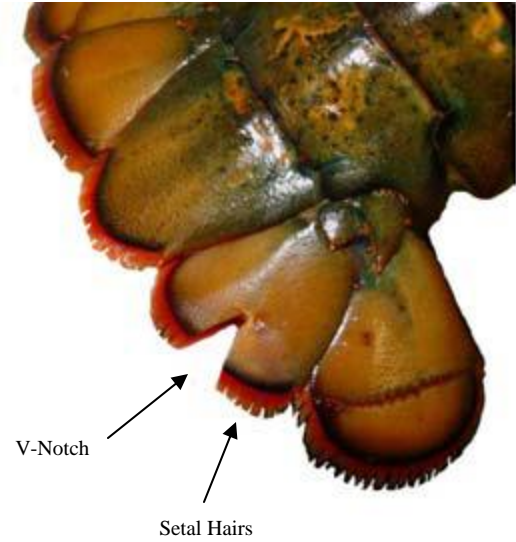
V-Notching Regulations

What is V-Notching?

A “v-notch” is a mark on the tail flipper of a female lobster that was put there by commercial lobstermen as a means to identify and protect known “breeders” in the population from harvest.

Commercial lobstermen make a v-notch in the tail flippers of egg-bearing female lobsters they encounter while fishing.

The v-notch remains in the female lobsters tail for two molts, giving them protection from harvest for up to 5 years.



V-Notching History

The practice of v-notching originated in Maine, and dates back to the early 1900's.

Today it is intended as a means of protecting local “broodstock”.

Which flipper is notched?

The tail flipper immediately to the right of the middle flipper, when the lobster is examined with the underside of the lobster down and its tail is toward the person making the determination.



Below are pictures of the v-notch to the left before and after it underwent two successive molts. **Note** that changes occurred even before the lobster molted.



Non-Commercial Lobster/Crab Permit holders are not required to v-notch egg-bearing female lobsters.

All About Crabs

What are they?

Crabs are ten-legged (decapod) crustaceans. There are several edible crab species in Massachusetts, including blue crabs, Jonah crabs and rock crabs.

Where are they?

Blue Crabs can be found from Massachusetts south to Argentina, with Massachusetts at the northern extreme of their reproductive range. Their occurrence north of Cape Cod is rare. They are especially common in south coastal estuaries but can also be found sporadically in up to 120ft. of coastal water.

Jonah Crabs range from Nova Scotia to Florida, usually in deeper water than Blue and Rock crabs.

Rock Crabs can be found from Labrador to South Carolina. They are mainly found in waters up to 2600ft.

Growth

Blue crabs are a warm water fast-growing species. Typically, blue crabs reach a harvestable size between 12 and 18 months of age. The maximum size may reach 9 inches in the mid-Atlantic area within 3 years of age.

Similar to the American Lobster, blue crabs along with Jonah and rock crabs molt their entire shell in order to grow.

Egg-Bearing Females

It shall be unlawful for any fisherman to take or possess any egg-bearing blue crab or female crabs with the egg mass (sponge), egg pouch or bunion removed at any time.



Blue Crabs vs. Jonah Crabs vs. Rock Crabs



Blue crabs can easily be distinguished by the last pair of legs, which are paddle-shaped. They also have a very distinct pair of spines on the widest part of the shell. Like their name suggests, Blue Crabs have a blue colored shell, particularly evident on the claws and legs.



Jonah crabs have black tips on both of their front claws. They are a reddish-brown in color and have 9 jagged marginal teeth along the edge of their shells. Often confused with rock crabs, Jonah crabs are generally larger in overall size, as well as in the size of their front claws. They are also most often found in deeper water than rock crabs.



Rock crabs have a broadly oval-shaped body with 9 smooth-edged marginal teeth along the edge of their shell. They are yellowish in color and are often times freckled with reddish or purplish brown coloring.

Is it Male or Female?

Although crabs come in all shapes and sizes they all have the same basic body plan. To determine the sex of any crabs found in Massachusetts waters its as easy as flipping them over and taking a look at their abdomen. The abdomen or “apron” is curved under the body to protect the reproductive organs. Male crabs of virtually every species have an “apron” that is narrower than that of a female.

Male abdomen



Female abdomen



Blue Crabs

The blue crab female “apron” is triangular in immature females, but changes shape, becoming more rounded in mature females, while the male “apron” is narrow and elongated.



“Sally” -- An immature (adolescent) female blue crab, "V" or triangular shaped apron and red-tipped claws.



“Sook” -- A mature (adult) female blue crab, inverted "U" or bell-shaped apron and red-tipped claws.



“Jimmy” – A male blue crab, has a long, narrow, inverted “T”-shaped apron and blue-tipped claws.

All About Gear

Definitions

Single pots means individual lobster pots

Pot trawls means lobster pot trawls where single pots are tied together in a series and buoyed at both ends.

East end means that part of the pot trawl extending from 01 through 180 [degrees] magnetic.

West end means that part of a pot trawl extending from 181 through 00 [degree] magnetic.

Groundline means the line connecting pots on a pot trawl.

Buoy line means lines connecting pots to surface buoys.

Sinking line means line that has a specific gravity equal to or greater than that of seawater, 1.03, and does not float up in the water column.

Weak link means a breakable section or device that will part when subjected to specified poundage of pull pressure and, after parting, will result in a knotless end, no thicker than the diameter of the line, the so-called "bitter end" to prevent lodging in whale baleen.

How Many Traps Can I Set?

The Massachusetts Non-Commercial Lobster Permit allows for **10 traps ONLY**.

Can I Use "Star" Traps?

Open, collapsible wire traps, hauled by hand, such as the "star" trap, cannot be used to catch lobsters, but are legal for edible crabs.

Can Someone Else Pull My Traps?

Any immediate family member that resides in your household may pull your traps for you.

Trawls vs. Single Pots

A Non-Commercial Lobster/Crabbing Permit allows for the use of pot trawls or single pots. Traditionally, Non-Commercial Lobster Permit holders prefer to use single pots or two-pot trawls called "doubles". Doubles shall be marked with a single buoy line.

Permit Number/ Gear Marking

All buoys, pots, traps, and cars must be marked with licensee's 4 - digit permit number assigned by the Director. The permit number must be burned or cut into the surface at least 1/2" high x 1/8" thick. In the case of non-wooden traps, said numbers shall be burned or cut into a wooden lath or a plate made of durable synthetic material, which shall be permanently secured to the inside of the trap.

Non-Commercial lobster/crabbing permit holders must also add the letter "N" preceding their 4 - digit permit #, followed by a dash (-) with a single digit from 0 to 9, indicating the sequential pot number in the series that the permit holder is fishing.

For example, if a Non-Commercial lobster/crabbing permit holder with the permit # 1234 has four pots in the water, they would brand their pots and buoys as follows: N-1234-1, N-1234-2, N-1234-3, N-1234-4. A maximum of 10 pots may be set, and in the example used above, the tenth pot in the series would be branded: N-1234-0.

Wooden lobster buoys may not be used.

Minimum Requirements

Single pots - Single pots shall each be marked with a single 7" x 7" or 5" x 11" buoy. Sticks are optional, but if used, shall not have a flag attached.

Pot trawls - The east end of a pot trawl shall be marked with a double buoy, consisting of any combination of two 7" x 7" or 5" x 11" buoys and one or more three foot sticks (so the two buoys can be side-by-side or stacked). The west end of a pot trawl shall be marked with a single 7" x 7" or 5" x 11" buoy with a three foot stick and a flag.

Buoy Colors

Each applicant for a Non-Commercial Lobster Permit can choose up to three colors for the desired color scheme of their buoys. All buoys used by the permit holder must be marked with that specific color scheme.

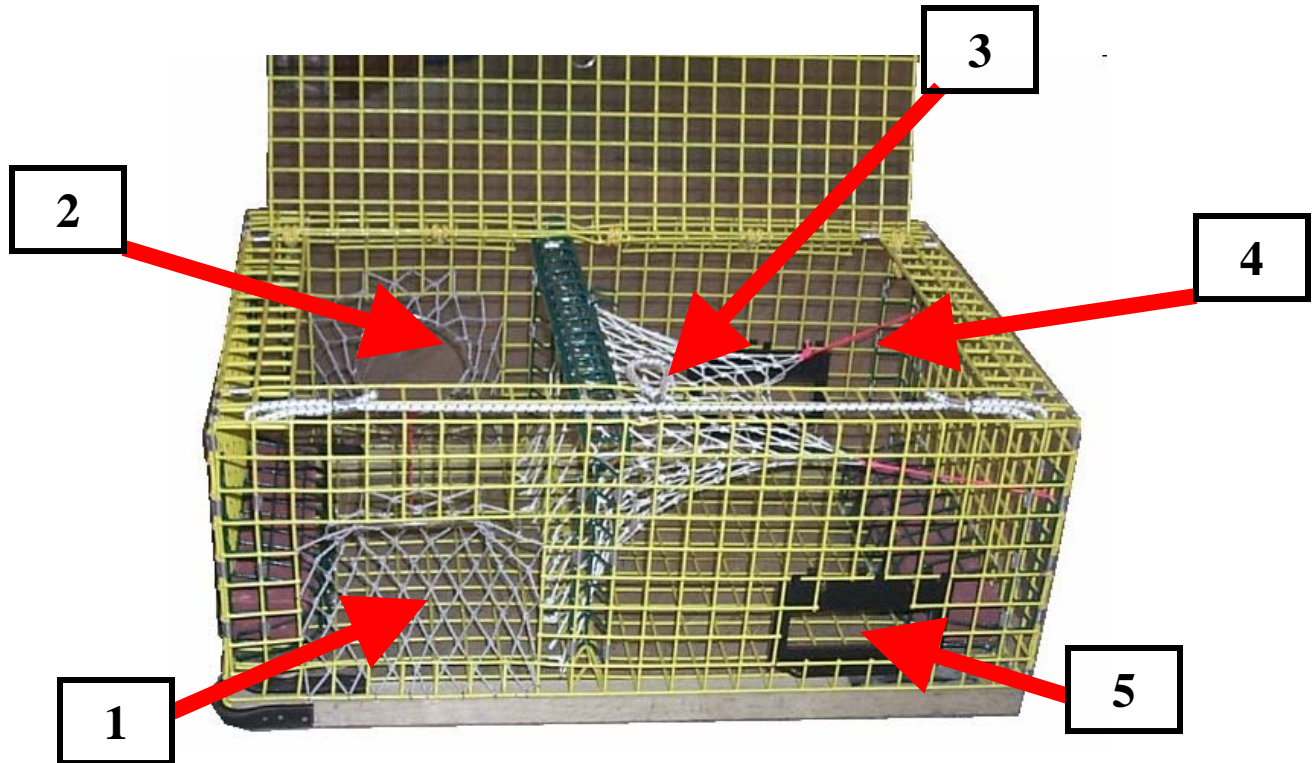


Trap Tags

The Non-Commercial Lobster/Crabbing Permit holders' 0 to 9 trap numbering scheme negates the requirement to use trap tags for marking gear.

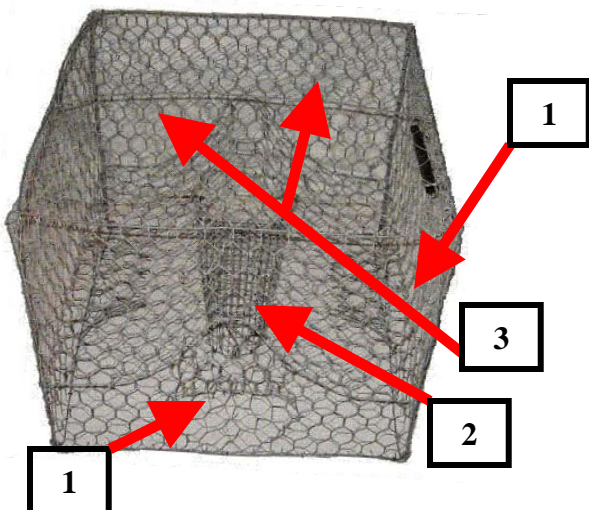


Anatomy of a Lobster Trap



1. **Entrance Head:** Mesh opening where lobsters enter the trap
2. **Kitchen:** This is where the bait bag is placed to attract lobsters into the trap.
3. **Parlor Head or Funnel:** Lobster use this mesh netting as a means out of the kitchen, assuming it's a way out of the trap.
4. **Parlor:** Area where the lobsters end up after leaving the kitchen and traveling up the funnel. Most of the catch will be found in this part of the trap.
5. **Escape Vent/Ghost Panel:** Opening of designated size that allows sub-legal lobsters to escape the trap. The biodegradable materials used to attach the escape vent panel will allow the "ghost panel" to open if the trap has been lost or abandoned. This allows the catch to escape the trap.

Anatomy of a Chesapeake Bay-style Blue Crab Pot



1. **Entrance Heads or Funnels:** There are 4 entrance funnels on a traditional Chesapeake-style crab pot, one on each side of the pot. All four entrance funnels lead to the bait-box in the center of the pot.
2. **Bait-box:** The bait is placed in the centrally-located bait box in order to attract crabs.
3. **Parlor:** The parlor is in the top of the trap where crabs tend to move when searching for an exit.

This style of trap is generally 2 feet square.

Crab pots must adhere to lobster gear marking and venting requirements (see pages 12 and 14).

Gear Construction Requirements

Restrictions

It is unlawful for any person to take or attempt to take lobsters or crabs by use of pots or traps without said pots or traps having the following features:

- Escape Vent
- Ghost Panel

It is also unlawful for any lobster/crab trap to exceed a volume of 22,950 cubic inches.

Ghost Panel

Ghost panels are designed to create an opening to allow the escapement of lobsters within 12 months after a trap has been abandoned or lost.

Ghost panel specifications:

- The opening covered by the panel must be rectangular and measure at least 3 ¾" by 3 ¾"
- It must be located in the outer parlor section of the trap and in a position which allows an unobstructed exit of lobsters from the trap.
- The panel must be constructed of, or fastened to the trap with, one of the following materials: wood lath; cotton, hemp, sisal or jute twine not greater than 3/16 inch in diameter; or non-stainless, uncoated ferrous metal not greater than 3/32 inch in diameter.

Escape Vent

Escapes vents are required in order to allow sub-legal lobsters and other non-targeted species to escape lobster/crab traps.

It is required that one or more rectangular escape vents or openings **or** two or more unobstructed round openings be placed in the parlor section of the trap.

If your traps have 2 parlors, **BOTH** must be vented.

Non-commercial fishermen fishing in the Gulf of Maine Recreational Lobster/Crabbing Area: Rectangular escape vents must be at least 1-15/16 inches by 5 3/4 inches or two circular vents must measure at least 2-7/16 inches.

Non-commercial fishermen fishing in the Outer Cape Cod or Southern New England Recreational Lobster Areas:

Rectangular escape vents must measure at least two inches by 5 3/4 inches or two circular vents must measure at least 2 5/8 inches.

Gear Questions

Can the escape vent be used as the ghost panel?

Yes. The escape vent may serve as a ghost panel if incorporated into a panel constructed of, or attached to the trap with: wood lath, cotton, hemp, sisal or jute twine not greater than 3/16 inch in diameter; or non-stainless, uncoated ferrous metal not greater than 3/32 inch in diameter, and upon breakdown of the degradable materials, will create an opening for egress of lobsters at least 3 3/4 by 3 3/4 inches.

Can the door of the trap be considered a ghost panel?

Yes. The door of the trap may serve as the ghost panel if fastened to the trap with: wood lath, cotton, hemp, sisal or jute twine not greater than 3/16 inch in diameter; or non-stainless, uncoated ferrous metal not greater than 3/32 inch diameter.

Do escape vents and ghost panels need to be attached in a specific orientation?

No. Escape vents and ghost panels need to provide an **unobstructed** means for escape for lobsters and must be located in the parlor section of the trap. It has been observed, however, that certain orientations work better than others (see next page).

If I use wood traps do I need a ghost panel?

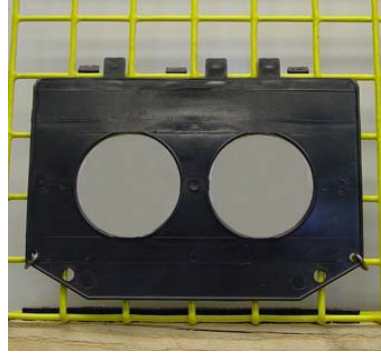
Traps constructed entirely or partially of wood shall be considered to be in compliance if constructed of wood lath to the extent that deterioration of wooden component(s) will result in an unobstructed opening at least 3 ¾ inches by 3 ¾ inches.

Why are there rectangular and circular vent options?

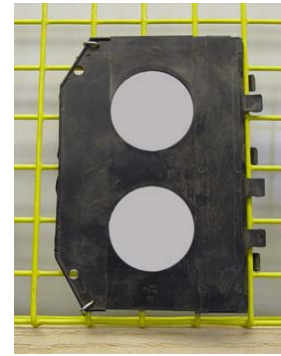
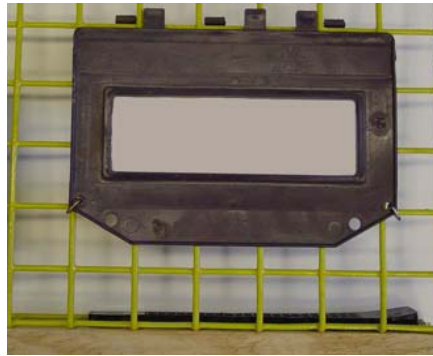
Circular vents retain crabs better than rectangular vents.

Escape Vent and Ghost Panel Placement

More Effective Placement In Allowing Escapement of Sublegal Lobsters



Less Effective Placement In Allowing Escapement of Sublegal Lobsters



•**Note:** These examples are meant to be used as suggestions for escape vent and ghost panel placement in lobster traps. It is NOT required that escape vents and ghost panels be positioned in any way, except to provide an “unobstructed” means for escape by sub-legal lobsters.

•Less effective locations for escape vent panels include the inside of a trap and the upper panel and door.

Whale-Related Gear Rules

Massachusetts state waters are important habitat for endangered large whale species, including the humpback whale and North Atlantic right whale. Entanglement in fishing gear is a major cause of injury and mortality for large whales. *Marine Fisheries* requires the use of modified fishing gear in order to reduce the risk of whale entanglement and identify entangling gear.

Definitions

Single means one pot with a single buoy line attached

Double means a two pot string of traps with a single buoy line attached

Triple means a three pot string of traps with a single buoy line attached

Sinking line means line that has a specific gravity greater than that of seawater, 1.03, and does not float up in the water column.

Weak Link means a breakable section or device that will part when subjected to specified poundage of pull pressure and after parting, will result in a knot-less end, no thicker than the diameter of the line, the so-called "bitter end" to prevent lodging in whale baleen.

Abandon or dispose of at sea means to leave fixed gear in the water without hauling it at least every 30 days or in prohibited areas during prohibited periods.

Twin orange markers means a pair of identical orange flag-like strips of material that are clearly visible and attached to the buoy stick or high flyer.



Year-Round Regulations in all Massachusetts State Waters

The following restrictions apply to all recreational pot gear on a year-round basis.

- 1) **All buoys must be outfitted with a 600-pound weak link. More details [here](#) and below:**
- 2) **If fishing pot trawls, sinking groundline must be used between all traps.**
- 3) **Vertical buoy lines must be made of sinking line, except the bottom 1/3 portion, which may be floating line if desired.**
- 4) **All gear must have a 4 inch red marker midway on the buoy line. More details [here](#) and below:**

Weak Links

Weak links allow the buoy to part away from the buoy line in the event that a whale encounters your gear.

Hog Ring Weak Link



Swivel Weak Links



Images: NOAA Fisheries Service

Buoy line Marking

By marking the rope, that gear can be identified to a certain area and fishery, if it is taken off an entangled whale.



Cape Cod Bay Critical Habitat Gear Rules

The North Atlantic right whale is one of the most endangered large whales in the world. Cape Cod Bay is federally-designated as Critical Habitat for the species. Right whales return to this area each winter and spring to on the abundant zooplankton in the bay. To reduce the risk of entanglement in fishing gear in this important habitat, *Marine Fisheries* requires compliance with strict seasonal gear restrictions during the time the whales are present.

January 1 – May 15

During the period of **January 1st to May 15th**, the following restrictions apply to all gear in the CCB Critical Habitat Area.

- 1) **The use of single pots is prohibited.** Fishermen may use either multiple pot trawls consisting of four pots or more or may set doubles or triples.
 - a) Multiple pot trawls shall consist of four pots or more with vertical buoy lines on the first and last pot of the trawl
- 2) **Double or triple pot trawls must have only 1 buoy line.**
 - a) It is unlawful to fish double or triple pot trawls with more than one vertical buoy line attached.
- 3) **All trawls must have twin orange markers or flags on each buoy.** (See definition on previous page)
- 4) **All trawls must have 500 pound weak links on each buoy.** More details [here](#) and on previous page.
- 5) **All trawls must have a 4 inch red marker midway on each buoy line.** More details [here](#) and on previous page.

May 16 – December 31

The following restrictions apply to all gear in the CCB Critical Habitat Area on a year-round basis.

- 1) **All buoys must outfitted with a 600-pound weak link.** More details [here](#) and on previous page.
- 2) **If fishing pot trawls, sinking groundline must be used between all traps**
- 3) **Vertical buoy lines must be made of sinking line, except the bottom 1/3 portion, which may be floating line if desired.**
- 4) **All gear must have a 4 inch red marker midway on the buoy line.** More details [here](#) and on previous page.

