

(8) If requested, NMFS may authorize the use of pingers with specifications or pinger configurations differing from those set forth in paragraphs (c)(1) and (c)(3) of this section for limited, experimental purposes within a single fishing season.

(d) *Skipper education workshops.* After notification from NMFS, vessel operators must attend a skipper education workshop before commencing fishing each fishing season. For the 1997/1998 fishing season, all vessel operators must have attended one skipper education workshop by October 30, 1997. NMFS may waive the requirement to attend these workshops by notice to all vessel operators.

[62 FR 51813, Oct. 3, 1997, as amended at 63 FR 27861, May 21, 1998; 64 FR 3432, Jan. 22, 1999]

§ 229.32 Atlantic large whale take reduction plan regulations.

(a)(1) *Purpose and scope.* The purpose of this section is to implement the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan to reduce incidental mortality and serious injury of fin, humpback, and right whales in specific Category I and Category II commercial fisheries from Maine through Florida. The measures identified in the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan are also intended to benefit minke whales, which are not designated as a strategic stock, but are known to be taken incidentally in gillnet and trap/pot fisheries. The gear types affected by this plan include gillnets (e.g., anchored, drift, and shark) and traps/pots.

(2) *Regulated waters.* The regulations in this section apply to all U.S. waters in the Atlantic except for the areas exempted in paragraph (a)(3) of this section.

(3) *Exempted waters.* (i) The regulations in this section do not apply to waters landward of the first bridge over any embayment, harbor, or inlet in Massachusetts.

(ii) The regulations in this section do not apply to waters landward of the 72 COLREGS demarcation lines (International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972), as depicted or noted on nautical charts published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Coast Charts 1:80,000 scale), and as described in 33 CFR part

80 with the exception of the COLREGS lines for Casco Bay (Maine), Portsmouth Harbor (New Hampshire), Gardiners Bay and Long Island Sound (New York), and the state of Massachusetts.

(iii) *Other exempted waters.* The regulations in this section do not apply to waters landward of the following lines:

Maine

A line connecting the following points (Quoddy Narrows/U.S.-Canada border to Odiornes Pt., Portsmouth, New Hampshire):

44°49.67' N. lat., 66°57.77' W. long. (R N "2", Quoddy Narrows)
 44°48.64' N. lat., 66°56.43' W. long. (G "1" Whistle, West Quoddy Head)
 44°47.36' N. lat., 66°59.25' W. long. (R N "2", Morton Ledge)
 44°45.51' N. lat., 67°02.87' W. long. (R "28M" Whistle, Baileys Mistake)
 44°37.70' N. lat., 67°09.75' W. long. (Obstruction, Southeast of Cutler)
 44°27.77' N. lat., 67°32.86' W. long. (Freeman Rock, East of Great Wass Island)
 44°25.74' N. lat., 67°38.39' W. long. (R "2SR" Bell, Seahorse Rock, West of Great Wass Island)
 44°21.66' N. lat., 67°51.78' W. long. (R N "2", Petit Manan Island)
 44°19.08' N. lat., 68°02.05' W. long. (R "2S" Bell, Schoodic Island)
 44°13.55' N. lat., 68°10.71' W. long. (R "8BI" Whistle, Baker Island)
 44°08.36' N. lat., 68°14.75' W. long. (Southern Point, Great Duck Island)
 43°59.36' N. lat., 68°37.95' W. long. (R "2" Bell, Roaring Bull Ledge, Isle Au Haut)
 43°59.83' N. lat., 68°50.06' W. long. (R "2A" Bell, Old Horse Ledge)
 43°56.72' N. lat., 69°04.89' W. long. (G "5TB" Bell, Two Bush Channel)
 43°50.28' N. lat., 69°18.86' W. long. (R "2 OM" Whistle, Old Man Ledge)
 43°48.96' N. lat., 69°31.15' W. long. (GR C "PL", Pemaquid Ledge)
 43°43.64' N. lat., 69°37.58' W. long. (R "2BR" Bell, Bantam Rock)
 43°41.44' N. lat., 69°45.27' W. long. (R "20ML" Bell, Mile Ledge)
 43°36.04' N. lat., 70°03.98' W. long. (RG N "BS", Bulwark Shoal)
 43°31.94' N. lat., 70°08.68' W. long. (G "1", East Hue and Cry)

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43°27.63' N. lat., 70°17.48' W. long. (RW "WI" Whistle, Wood Island)
43°20.23' N. lat., 70°23.64' W. long. (RW "CP" Whistle, Cape Porpoise)
43°04.06' N. lat., 70°36.70' W. long. (R N "2MR", Murray Rock)
43°02.93' N. lat., 70°41.47' W. long. (R "2KR" Whistle, Kittery Point)
43°02.55' N. lat., 70°43.33' W. long. (Odiornes Pt., Portsmouth, New Hampshire)

New Hampshire

A line from 42°53.691' N. lat., 70°48.516' W. long. to 42°53.516' N. lat., 70°48.748' W. long. (Hampton Harbor)
A line from 42°59.986' N. lat., 70°44.654' W. long. to 42°59.956' N., 70°44.737' W. long. (Rye Harbor)

Rhode Island

A line from 41°22.441' N. lat., 71°30.781' W. long. to 41°22.447' N. lat., 71°30.893' W. long. (Pt. Judith Pond Inlet)
A line from 41°21.310' N. lat., 71°38.300' W. long. to 41°21.300' N. lat., 71°38.330' W. long. (Ninigret Pond Inlet)
A line from 41°19.875' N. lat., 71°43.061' W. long. to 41°19.879' N. lat., 71°43.115' W. long. (Quonochontaug Pond Inlet)
A line from 41°19.660' N. lat., 71°45.750' W. long. to 41°19.660' N. lat., 71°45.780' W. long. (Weekapaug Pond Inlet)

New York

A line that follows the territorial sea baseline through Block Island Sound (Watch Hill Point, RI, to Montauk Point, NY)

South Carolina

A line from 32°34.717' N. lat., 80°08.565' W. long. to 32°34.686' N. lat., 80°08.642' W. long. (Captain Sams Inlet)

(4) *Sinking groundline exemption.* The fisheries regulated under this section are exempt from the requirement to have groundlines composed of sinking line if their groundline is at a depth equal to or greater than 280 fathoms (1,680 ft or 512.1 m) (as shown on NOAA charts 13200 (Georges Bank and Nantucket Shoals, 1:400,000), 12300 (NY Approaches - Nantucket Shoals to Five Fathom Bank, 1:400,000), 12200 (Cape May to Cape Hatteras, 1:419,706), 11520 (Cape Hatteras to Charleston, 1:432,720), 11480 (Charleston Light to Cape Canav-

eral, 1:449,659) and 11460 (Cape Canaveral to Key West, 1:466,940)).

(5) *Net panel weak link and anchoring exemption.* The anchored gillnet fisheries regulated under this section are exempt from the requirement to install weak links in the net panel and anchor each end of the net string if the floatline is at a depth equal to or greater than 280 fathoms (1,680 ft or 512.1 m) (as shown on NOAA charts 13200 (Georges Bank and Nantucket Shoals, 1:400,000), 12300 (NY Approaches—Nantucket Shoals to Five Fathom Bank, 1:400,000), 12200 (Cape May to Cape Hatteras, 1:419,706), 11520 (Cape Hatteras to Charleston, 1:432,720), 11480 (Charleston Light to Cape Canaveral, 1:449,659) and 11460 (Cape Canaveral to Key West, 1:466,940)).

(b) *Gear marking requirements.* (1) Specified gear consists of trap/pot gear and gillnet gear set in specified areas.

(2) *Specified areas.* The following areas are specified for gear marking purposes: Northern Inshore State Trap/Pot Waters, Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area, Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area, Northern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters Area, Great South Channel Restricted Trap/Pot Area, Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area, Great South Channel Sliver Restricted Area, Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters Area, Offshore Trap/Pot Waters Area, Other Northeast Gillnet Waters Area, Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters Area, Other Southeast Gillnet Waters Area, Southeast U.S. Restricted Area, and Southeast U.S. Monitoring Area.

(i) *Requirements for Shark Gillnet Gear in the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area S, Southeast U.S. Monitoring Area and Other Southeast Gillnet Waters—(A) Color code.* Shark gillnet gear (i.e., gillnet gear for shark with webbing of 5 inches (12.7 cm) or greater stretched mesh) in the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area S, Southeast U.S. Monitoring Area, and Other Southeast Gillnet Waters must be marked with the appropriate color code to designate gear types and areas as follows:

(1) *Gear type code.* Shark gillnet gear must be marked with a green marking.

(2) *Area code.* Shark gillnet gear set in the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area S, Southeast U.S. Monitoring Area,

and Other Southeast Gillnet Waters must be marked with a blue marking.

(B) *Markings.* All specified gear in specified areas must be marked with two color codes, one designating the gear type, the other indicating the area where the gear is set. Each color of the two-color code must be permanently marked on or along the line or lines specified below under paragraphs (b)(2)(i)(C) and (D) of this section. Each color mark of the color codes must be clearly visible when the gear is hauled or removed from the water. Each mark must be at least 4 inches (10.2 cm) long. The two color marks must be placed within 6 inches (15.2 cm) of each other. If the color of the rope is the same as or similar to a color code, a white mark may be substituted for that color code. In marking or affixing the color code, the line may be dyed, painted, or marked with thin colored whipping line, thin colored plastic, or heat-shrink tubing, or other material; or a thin line may be woven into or through the line; or the line may be marked as approved in writing by the Assistant Administrator. A brochure illustrating the techniques for marking gear is available from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region upon request.

(C) *Buoy line markings.* All buoy lines greater than 4 feet (1.22 m) long must be marked within 2 feet (0.6 m) of the top of the buoy line (closest to the surface) and midway along the length of the buoy line.

(D) *Net panel markings.* Each gillnet net panel must be marked along both the floatline and the leadline at least once every 100 yards (91.4 m), unless otherwise required by the Assistant Administrator under paragraph (i) of this section.

(ii) *Requirements for other specified areas.* Any person who owns or fishes with specified gear in the other specified areas must mark that gear in accordance with paragraphs (b)(2)(ii)(A), (b)(2)(ii)(B), and (b)(2)(iii) of this section, unless otherwise required by the Assistant Administrator under paragraph (i) of this section.

(A) *Color code.* Specified gear must be marked with the appropriate colors to designate gear-types and areas as follows:

(1) Trap/pot gear in the Northern Inshore State Trap/Pot Waters Area, the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area, the Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area, the Great South Channel Restricted Trap/Pot Area where it overlaps with Lobster Management Area (LMA) 2 and the Outer Cape LMA (as defined in the American Lobster Fishery regulations in 50 CFR 697.18), and the Northern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters Area must be marked with a red marking.

(2) Trap/pot gear in the Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters Area must be marked with an orange marking.

(3) Trap/pot gear in the Great South Channel Restricted Trap/Pot Area where it overlaps with LMA 2/3 Overlap and LMA 3 (as defined in the American Lobster Fishery regulations in 50 CFR 697.18), and the Offshore Trap/Pot Waters Area must be marked with a black marking.

(4) Anchored and drift gillnet gear in the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area, Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area, Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area, Great South Channel Sliver Restricted Area, and Other Northeast Gillnet Waters Area must be marked with a green marking.

(5) Anchored and drift gillnet gear in the Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters Area must be marked with a blue marking.

(6) Gillnet gear (except gillnet gear for shark with webbing of 5 inches (12.7 cm) or greater stretched mesh) in the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area S and Other Southeast Gillnet Waters must be marked with a yellow marking.

(B) *Markings.* All specified gear in specified areas must be marked with one color code described in paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A) of this section (which indicates the gear type and general area where the gear is set). Each color code must be permanently affixed on or along the line or lines. Each color code must be clearly visible when the gear is hauled or removed from the water. Each mark must be at least 4 inches (10.2 cm) long and be placed midway on the buoy line in the water column. If the color of the rope is the same as or similar to a color code, a white mark may be substituted for that color code. In marking or affixing the color code,

the line may be dyed, painted, or marked with thin colored whipping line, thin colored plastic, or heat-shrink tubing, or other material; or a thin line may be woven into or through the line; or the line may be marked as approved in writing by the Assistant Administrator. A brochure illustrating the techniques for marking gear is available from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region upon request.

(iii) *Requirements for all specified areas—(A) Surface buoy markings.* Trap/pot and gillnet gear regulated under this section must mark all surface buoys to identify the vessel or fishery with one of the following: The owner's motorboat registration number, the owner's U.S. vessel documentation number, the federal commercial fishing permit number, or whatever positive identification marking is required by the vessel's home-port state. When marking of surface buoys is not already required by state or federal regulations, the letters and numbers used to mark the gear to identify the vessel or fishery must be at least 1 inch (2.5 cm) in height in block letters or arabic numbers in a color that contrasts with the background color of the buoy. A brochure illustrating the techniques for marking gear is available upon request from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region upon request.

(3) *Changes to requirements.* If the Assistant Administrator revises the gear marking requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section, the gear must be marked in compliance with those requirements.

(c) *Restrictions applicable to trap/pot gear in regulated waters—(1) Universal trap/pot gear requirements.* In addition to the area-specific measures listed in paragraphs (c)(2) through (c)(9) of this section, all trap/pot gear in regulated waters, including the Northern Inshore State Trap/Pot Waters Area, must comply with the universal gear requirements listed here.¹ The Assistant Administrator may revise these re-

¹Fishermen are also encouraged to maintain their buoy lines to be as knot-free as possible. Splices are considered to be less of an entanglement threat and are thus preferable to knots.

quirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(i) *No buoy line floating at the surface.* No person or vessel may fish with trap/pot gear that has any portion of the buoy line floating at the surface at any time when the buoy line is directly connected to the gear at the ocean bottom. If more than one buoy is attached to a single buoy line or if a high flyer and a buoy are used together on a single buoy line, floating line may be used between these objects.

(ii) *No wet storage of gear.* Trap/pot gear must be hauled out of the water at least once every 30 days.

(2) *Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area—(i) Area.* The Cape Cod Bay restricted area consists of the Cape Cod Bay right whale critical habitat area specified under 50 CFR 226.203(b) unless the Assistant Administrator changes that area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(ii) *Area-specific gear or vessel requirements during the winter restricted period.* No person or vessel may fish with or possess trap/pot gear in the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area during the winter restricted period unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal trap/pot gear requirements specified in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements listed below for the winter restricted period, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(A) *Winter restricted period.* The winter restricted period for the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area is from January 1 through May 15 of each year unless the Assistant Administrator changes this period in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(B) *Buoy line weak links.* All buoys, flotation devices and/or weights (except traps/pots, anchors, and leadline woven into the buoy line), such as surface buoys, high flyers, sub-surface buoys, toggles, window weights, etc., must be attached to the buoy line with a weak link placed as close to each individual buoy, flotation device and/or weight as operationally feasible and

that meets the following specifications:

(1) The breaking strength of the weak links must not exceed 500 lb (226.8 kg).

(2) The weak link must be chosen from the following list approved by NMFS: Swivels, plastic weak links, rope of appropriate breaking strength, hog rings, rope stapled to a buoy stick, or other materials or devices approved in writing by the Assistant Administrator. A brochure illustrating the techniques for making weak links is available from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region upon request.

(3) Weak links must break cleanly leaving behind the bitter end of the line. The bitter end of the line must be free of any knots when the weak link breaks. Splices are not considered to be knots for the purposes of this provision.

(C) *Single traps and multiple-trap trawls.* Single traps and three-trap trawls are prohibited. All traps must be set in either a two-trap string or in a trawl of four or more traps. A two-trap string must have no more than one buoy line.

(D) *Buoy lines.* All buoy lines must be composed of sinking line except the bottom portion of the line, which may be a section of floating line not to exceed one-third the overall length of the buoy line.

(E) *Groundlines.* All groundlines must be composed entirely of sinking line. The attachment of buoys, toggles, or other floatation devices to groundlines is prohibited.

(iii) *Area-specific gear or vessel requirements for the other restricted period.* No person or vessel may fish with or possess trap/pot gear in the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area during the other restricted period unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section and the universal trap/pot gear requirements specified in paragraph (c)(1) of this section as well as the area-specific requirements listed below for the other restricted period, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(A) *Other restricted period.* The other restricted period for the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area is from May 16 through December 31 of each year unless the Assistant Administrator revises this period in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(B) *Gear and vessel requirements—(1) State-water portion.* No person or vessel may fish with or possess trap/pot gear in the state-water portion of the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area during the other restricted period unless that gear complies with the requirements for the Northern Inshore State Trap/Pot Waters Area listed in paragraph (c)(6) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(2) *Federal-water portion.* No person or vessel may fish with or possess trap/pot gear in the Federal-water portion of the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area during the other restricted period unless that gear complies with the requirements for the Northern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters Area in paragraph (c)(7) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(3) *Great South Channel Restricted Trap/Pot Area—(i) Area.* The Great South Channel Restricted Trap/Pot Area consists of the Great South Channel right whale critical habitat area specified under 50 CFR 226.203(a) unless the Assistant Administrator changes that area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(ii) *Closure during the spring restricted period.* The spring restricted period for the Great South Channel Restricted Trap/Pot Area is from April 1 through June 30 of each year unless the Assistant Administrator revises this period in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section. During the spring restricted period, no person or vessel may fish with, set, or possess trap/pot gear in this Area unless the Assistant Administrator specifies gear modifications or alternative fishing practices in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section and the gear or practices comply with

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those specifications, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2.

(iii) *Area-specific gear or vessel requirements for the other restricted period.* The other restricted period for the Great South Channel Restricted Trap/Pot Area is July 1 through March 31, unless the Assistant Administrator revises this period in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section. During the other restricted period, no person or vessel may fish with or possess trap/pot gear in the Great South Channel Restricted Trap/Pot Area unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, and the universal trap/pot gear requirements specified in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. Additionally, no person or vessel may fish with or possess trap/pot gear in the Great South Channel Restricted Trap/Pot Area unless that gear complies with the requirements listed for Northern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters Area in paragraph (c)(7) of this section where the Great South Channel Restricted Trap/Pot Area overlaps with Lobster Management Area (LMA) 2 and the Outer Cape LMA (as defined in the American Lobster Fishery regulations in 50 CFR 697.18); the requirements listed for Offshore Trap/Pot Waters Area in paragraph (c)(5) of this section where the Great South Channel Restricted Trap/Pot Area overlaps with LMA 2/3 Overlap and LMA 3 (as defined in the American Lobster Fishery regulations in 50 CFR 697.18); or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(4) *Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area—(i) Area.* The Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area includes all Federal waters of the Gulf of Maine, except those designated as right whale critical habitat under 50 CFR 226.203(b), that lie south of 43°15' N. lat. and west of 70°00' W. long. The Assistant Administrator may change that area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(ii) *Year-round area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* No person or vessel may fish with or possess trap/pot gear in the Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge

Restricted Area unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal trap/pot gear requirements specified in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, and the requirements listed for the Northern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters Area specified in paragraph (c)(7) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(5) *Offshore Trap/Pot² Waters Area—(i) Area.* The Offshore Trap/Pot Waters Area includes all Federal waters of the EEZ Offshore Management Area 3 (including the area known as the Area 2/3 Overlap and Area 3/4 Overlap as defined in the American Lobster Fishery regulations at 50 CFR 697.18, with the exception of the Great South Channel Restricted Trap/Pot Area), and extending south along the 100-fathom (600-ft or 182.9-m) depth contour from 35°30' N. lat. south to 27°51' N. lat., and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(ii) *Year-round area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* No person or vessel may fish with or possess trap/pot gear in the Offshore Trap/Pot Waters Area that overlaps an area from the U.S./Canada border south to a straight line from 41°18.2' N. lat., 71°51.5' W. long. (Watch Hill Point, RI) south to 40°00' N. lat., and then east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal trap/pot gear requirements specified in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements listed below, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(A) *Buoy line weak links.* All buoys, flotation devices and/or weights (except traps/pots, anchors, and leadline woven into the buoy line), such as surface buoys, high flyers, sub-surface

²Fishermen using red crab trap/pot gear should refer to § 229.32(c)(9) for the restrictions applicable to red crab trap/pot fishery.

buoys, toggles, window weights, etc., must be attached to the buoy line with a weak link placed as close to each individual buoy, flotation device and/or weight as operationally feasible and that meets the following specifications:

(1) The weak link must be chosen from the following list approved by NMFS: Swivels, plastic weak links, rope of appropriate breaking strength, hog rings, rope stapled to a buoy stick, or other materials or devices approved in writing by the Assistant Administrator. A brochure illustrating the techniques for making weak links is available from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region upon request.

(2) The breaking strength of the weak links may not exceed 1,500 lb (680.4 kg).

(3) Weak links must break cleanly leaving behind the bitter end of the line. The bitter end of the line must be free of any knots when the weak link breaks. Splices are not considered to be knots for the purposes of this provision.

(B) *Groundlines.* On or before April 5, 2009, all groundlines must be composed entirely of sinking line unless exempted from this requirement under paragraph (a)(4) of this section. The attachment of buoys, toggles, or other flotation devices to groundlines is prohibited.

(iii) *Seasonal area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* From September 1 to May 31, no person or vessel may fish with or possess trap/pot gear in the Off-shore Trap/Pot Waters Area that overlaps an area bounded on the north by a straight line from 41°18.2' N. lat., 71°51.5' W. long. (Watch Hill Point, RI) south to 40°00' N. lat. and then east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, and bounded on the south by a line at 32°00' N. lat., and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal trap/pot gear requirements specified in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, the area-specific requirements specified in paragraphs (c)(5)(ii)(A) and (c)(5)(ii)(B) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise that period and

these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(iv) *Seasonal area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* From November 15 to April 15, no person or vessel may fish with or possess trap/pot gear in the Off-shore Trap/Pot Waters Area that overlaps an area from 32°00' N. lat. south to 29°00' N. lat. and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal trap/pot gear requirements specified in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements specified in paragraphs (c)(5)(ii)(A) and (c)(5)(ii)(B) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise that period and these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(v) *Seasonal area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* From December 1 to March 31, no person or vessel may fish with or possess trap/pot gear in the Off-shore Trap/Pot Waters Area that overlaps an area from 29°00' N. lat. south to 27°51' N. lat. and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal trap/pot gear requirements specified in (c)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements specified in paragraphs (c)(5)(ii)(A) and (c)(5)(ii)(B) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise this period and these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(vi) [Reserved]

(6) *Northern Inshore State Trap/Pot Waters Area*—(i) *Area.* The Northern Inshore State Trap/Pot Waters Area includes the state waters of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine, with the exception of Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area and those waters exempted under paragraph (a)(3) of this section. The Assistant Administrator may change that area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(ii) *Year-round area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* No person or vessel may fish with or possess trap/pot gear in the Northern Inshore State Trap/Pot Waters Area unless that gear complies

with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal trap/pot gear requirements specified in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements listed below, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(A) *Buoy line weak links.* All buoys, flotation devices and/or weights (except traps/pots, anchors, and leadline woven into the buoy line), such as surface buoys, high flyers, sub-surface buoys, toggles, window weights, etc., must be attached to the buoy line with a weak link placed as close to each individual buoy, flotation device and/or weight as operationally feasible and that meets the following specifications:

(1) The weak link must be chosen from the following list approved by NMFS: swivels, plastic weak links, rope of appropriate breaking strength, hog rings, rope stapled to a buoy stick, or other materials or devices approved in writing by the Assistant Administrator. A brochure illustrating the techniques for making weak links is available from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region upon request.

(2) The breaking strength of the weak links may not exceed 600 lb (272.2 kg).

(3) Weak links must break cleanly leaving behind the bitter end of the line. The bitter end of the line must be free of any knots when the weak link breaks. Splices are not considered to be knots for the purposes of this provision.

(B) *Groundlines.* On or before April 5, 2009, all groundlines must be composed entirely of sinking line unless exempted for this requirement under paragraph (a)(4) of this section. The attachment of buoys, toggles, or other flotation devices to groundlines is prohibited.

(C) [Reserved]

(7) *Northern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters Area—(i) Area.* The Northern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters Area includes all Federal waters of EEZ Nearshore Management Area 1, Area 2, and the Outer Cape Lobster Management Area (as defined in the American Lobster Fishery

regulations at 50 CFR 697.18), with the exception of the Great South Channel Restricted Trap/Pot Area, Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area, Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area and those waters exempted under paragraph (a)(3) of this section. The Assistant Administrator may change that area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(ii) *Year-round area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* No person or vessel may fish with or possess trap/pot gear in the Northern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters Area unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal trap/pot gear requirements specified in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements listed below, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(A) *Buoy line weak links.* All buoys, flotation devices and/or weights (except traps/pots, anchors, and leadline woven into the buoy line), such as surface buoys, high flyers, sub-surface buoys, toggles, window weights, etc., must be attached to the buoy line with a weak link placed as close to each individual buoy, flotation device and/or weight as operationally feasible and that meets the following specifications:

(1) The weak link must be chosen from the following list approved by NMFS: swivels, plastic weak links, rope of appropriate breaking strength, hog rings, rope stapled to a buoy stick, or other materials or devices approved in writing by the Assistant Administrator. A brochure illustrating the techniques for making weak links is available from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region upon request.

(2) The breaking strength of the weak links must not exceed 600 lb (272.2 kg).

(3) Weak links must break cleanly leaving behind the bitter end of the line. The bitter end of the line must be free of any knots when the weak link breaks. Splices are not considered to be knots for the purposes of this provision.

(B) *Single traps and multiple-trap trawls.* Single traps are prohibited. All traps must be set in trawls of two or more traps. All trawls up to and including five traps must have no more than one buoy line.

(C) *Groundlines.* On or before April 5, 2009, all groundlines must be composed entirely of sinking line unless exempted from this requirement under paragraph (a)(4) of this section. The attachment of buoys, toggles, or other floatation devices to groundlines is prohibited.

(D) [Reserved]

(8) *Southern Nearshore³ Trap/Pot Waters Area*—(i) *Area.* The Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters Area includes all state and Federal waters which fall within EEZ Nearshore Management Area 4, EEZ Nearshore Management Area 5, and EEZ Nearshore Management Area 6 (as defined in the American Lobster Fishery regulations in 50 CFR 697.18), and inside the 100-fathom (600-ft or 182.9-m) depth contour line from 35°30' N lat. south to 27°51' N lat. and extending inshore to the shoreline or exemption line, with the exception of those waters exempted under paragraph (a)(3) of this section. The Assistant Administrator may change that area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(ii) *Year-round area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* No person or vessel may fish with or possess trap/pot gear in the Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters Area that is east of a straight line from 41°18.2' N. lat., 71°51.5' W. long. (Watch Hill Point, RI) south to 40°00' N. lat., unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal trap/pot gear requirements specified in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements listed here, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise that period and these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(A) *Buoy line weak links.* All buoys, floatation devices and/or weights (except traps/pots, anchors, and leadline

woven into the buoy line), such as surface buoys, high flyers, sub-surface buoys, toggles, window weights, etc., must be attached to the buoy line with a weak link placed as close to each individual buoy, floatation device and/or weight as operationally feasible and that meets the following specifications:

(1) The weak link must be chosen from the following list approved by NMFS: swivels, plastic weak links, rope of appropriate breaking strength, hog rings, rope stapled to a buoy stick, or other materials or devices approved in writing by the Assistant Administrator. A brochure illustrating the techniques for making weak links is available from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region upon request.

(2) The breaking strength of the weak links may not exceed 600 lb (272.2 kg).

(3) Weak links must break cleanly leaving behind the bitter end of the line. The bitter end of the line must be free of any knots when the weak link breaks. Splices are not considered to be knots for the purposes of this provision.

(B) *Groundlines.* On or before April 5, 2009, all groundlines must be composed entirely of sinking line unless exempted from this requirement under paragraph (a)(4) of this section. The attachment of buoys, toggles, or other floatation devices to groundlines is prohibited.

(iii) *Seasonal area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* From September 1 to May 31, no person or vessel may fish with or possess trap/pot gear in the Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters Area that overlaps an area bounded on the north by a straight line from 41°18.2' N. lat., 71°51.5' W. long. (Watch Hill Point, RI) south to 40°00' N. lat. and then east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, and bounded on the south by 32°00' N. lat., and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal trap/pot gear requirements in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, requirements specified in paragraphs (c)(8)(ii)(A) and (c)(8)(ii)(B) of this section, or unless the gear is

³Fishermen using red crab trap/pot gear should refer to §229.32(c)(9) for the restrictions applicable to red crab trap/pot fishery.

stowed as specified in §229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise that period and these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(iv) *Seasonal area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* From November 15 to April 15, no person or vessel may fish with or possess trap/pot gear in the Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters Area that overlaps an area from 32°00' N. lat. south to 29°00' N. lat. and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal trap/pot gear requirements specified in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements specified in paragraphs (c)(8)(ii)(A) and (c)(8)(ii)(B) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise that period and these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(v) *Seasonal area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* From December 1 to March 31, no person or vessel may fish with or possess trap/pot gear in the Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters Area that overlaps an area from 29°00' N. lat. south to 27°51' N. lat. and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal trap/pot gear requirements specified in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements specified in paragraphs (c)(8)(ii)(A) and (c)(8)(ii)(B) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise this period and these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(vi) [Reserved]

(9) *Restrictions applicable to the red crab trap/pot fishery—(i) Area.* The red crab trap/pot fishery is regulated in the waters identified in paragraphs (c)(5)(i) and (c)(8)(i) of this section.

(ii) *Year-round area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* No person or vessel may fish with or possess red crab trap/pot gear in the area identified in paragraph (c)(9)(i) of this section that overlaps an area from the U.S./Canada bor-

der south to a straight line from 41° 18.2' N. lat., 71°51.5' W. long. (Watch Hill Point, RI) south to 40°00' N. lat., and then east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal trap/pot gear requirements specified in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements listed below, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §229.2. The Assistant Administrator revises these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(A) *Buoy line weak links.* All buoys, flotation devices and/or weights (except traps/pots, anchors, and leadline woven into the buoy line), such as surface buoys, high flyers, sub-surface buoys, toggles, window weights, etc., must be attached to the buoy line with a weak link placed as close to each individual buoy, flotation device and/or weight as operationally feasible and that meets the following specifications:

(1) The weak link must be chosen from the following list approved by NMFS: Swivels, plastic weak links, rope of appropriate breaking strength, hog rings, rope stapled to a buoy stick, or other materials or devices approved in writing by the Assistant Administrator. A brochure illustrating the techniques for making weak links is available from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region upon request.

(2) The breaking strength of the weak links may not exceed 2,000 lb (907.2 kg).

(3) Weak links must break cleanly leaving behind the bitter end of the line. The bitter end of the line must be free of any knots when the weak link breaks. Splices are not considered to be knots for the purposes of this provision.

(B) *Groundlines.* On or before April 5, 2009, all groundlines must be composed entirely of sinking line unless exempted from this requirement under paragraph (a)(4) of this section. The attachment of buoys, toggles, or other flotation devices to groundlines is prohibited.

(iii) *Seasonal area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* From September 1 to May 31, no person or vessel may fish

with or possess red crab trap/pot gear in the area identified in paragraph (c)(9)(i) of this section that overlaps an area bounded on the north by a straight line from 41°18.2' N. lat., 71°51.5' W. long. (Watch Hill Point, RI) south to 40°00' N. lat. and then east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, and bounded on the south by a line at 32°00' N. lat., and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal trap/pot gear requirements specified in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements listed in paragraphs (c)(9)(ii)(A) and (c)(9)(ii)(B) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §229.2. The Assistant Administrator revises these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(iv) *Seasonal area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* From November 15 to April 15, no person or vessel may fish with or possess red crab trap/pot gear in the area identified in paragraph (c)(9)(i) of this section that overlaps an area from 32°00' N. lat. south to 29°00' N. lat. and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal trap/pot gear requirements specified in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements specified in paragraphs (c)(9)(ii)(A) and (c)(9)(ii)(B) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise that period and these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(v) *Seasonal area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* From December 1 to March 31, no person or vessel may fish with or possess red crab trap/pot gear in the area identified in paragraph (c)(9)(i) of this section that overlaps an area from 29°00' N. lat. south to 27°51' N. lat. and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal trap/pot gear requirements specified in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements specified in paragraphs

(c)(9)(ii)(A) and (c)(9)(ii)(B) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise that period and these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(vi) [Reserved]

(d) *Restrictions applicable to anchored gillnet gear—(1) Universal anchored gillnet gear requirements.* In addition to the area-specific measures listed in paragraphs (d)(2) through (d)(7) of this section, all anchored gillnet gear in regulated waters must comply with the universal gear requirements listed here.⁴ The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(i) *No buoy line floating at the surface.* No person or vessel may fish with anchored gillnet gear that has any portion of the buoy line floating at the surface at any time when the buoy line is directly connected to the gear at the ocean bottom. If more than one buoy is attached to a single buoy line or if a high flyer and a buoy are used together on a single buoy line, sinking line must be used between these objects.

(ii) *No wet storage of gear.* Anchored gillnet gear must be hauled out of the water at least once every 30 days.

(2) *Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area—(i) Area.* The Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area consists of the Cape Cod Bay right whale critical habitat area specified under 50 CFR 226.203(b), unless the Assistant Administrator changes that area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(ii) *Closure during the winter restricted period—(A) Winter restricted period.* The winter restricted period for this area is from January 1 through May 15 of each year, unless the Assistant Administrator revises that period in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(B) *Closure.* During the winter restricted period, no person or vessel may fish with or possess anchored gillnet gear in the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area unless the Assistant Administrator specifies gear restrictions

⁴Fishermen are also encouraged to maintain their buoy lines to be as knot-free as possible. Splices are considered to be less of an entanglement threat and are thus preferable to knots.

or alternative fishing practices in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section and the gear or practices comply with those specifications, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §229.2. The Assistant Administrator may waive this closure for the remaining portion of the winter restricted period in any year through a notification in the FEDERAL REGISTER if NMFS determines that right whales have left the restricted area and are unlikely to return for the remainder of the season.

(iii) *Area-specific gear or vessel requirements for the other restricted period—(A) Other restricted period.* The other restricted period for the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area is from May 16 through December 31 of each year unless the Assistant Administrator changes that period in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(B) *Area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* No person or vessel may fish with or possess anchored gillnet gear in the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area during the other restricted period unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal anchored gillnet gear requirements specified in paragraph (d)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements listed in paragraph (d)(6)(ii) of this section for the Other Northeast Gillnet Waters Area, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(3) *Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area—(i) Area.* The Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area consists of the area bounded by lines connecting the following four points: 41°02.2' N. lat./69°02' W. long., 41°43.5' N. lat./69°36.3' W. long., 42°10' N. lat./68°31' W. long., and 41°38' N. lat./68°13' W. long. This area includes most of the Great South Channel right whale critical habitat area specified under 50 CFR 226.203(a), with the exception of the sliver along the western boundary described in paragraph (d)(4)(i) of this section. The Assistant Administrator may change that area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(ii) *Closure during the spring restricted period—(A) Spring restricted period.* The

spring restricted period for the Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area is from April 1 through June 30 of each year unless the Assistant Administrator revises that period in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(B) *Closure.* During the spring restricted period, no person or vessel may set, fish with or possess anchored gillnet gear in the Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area unless the Assistant Administrator specifies gear restrictions or alternative fishing practices in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section and the gear or practices comply with those specifications, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §229.2.

(iii) *Area-specific gear or vessel requirements for the other restricted period—(A) Other restricted period.* The other restricted period for the Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area is from July 1 through March 31 of each year unless the Assistant Administrator changes that period in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(B) *Area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* During the other restricted period, no person or vessel may fish with or possess anchored gillnet gear in the Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal anchored gillnet gear requirements specified in paragraph (d)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements listed in paragraph (d)(6)(ii) of this section for the Other Northeast Gillnet Waters Area, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(4) *Great South Channel Sliver Restricted Area—(i) Area.* The Great South Channel Sliver Restricted Area consists of the area bounded by lines connecting the following points: 41°02.2' N. lat./69°02' W. long., 41°43.5' N. lat./69°36.3' W. long., 41°40' N. lat./69°45' W. long., and 41°00' N. lat./69°05' W. long. The Assistant Administrator may change that area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(ii) *Year-round area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* No person or vessel

may fish with or possess anchored gillnet gear in the Great South Channel Sliver Restricted Area unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal anchored gillnet gear requirements specified in paragraph (d)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements listed in paragraph (d)(6)(ii) of this section for the Other Northeast Gillnet Waters Area, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(5) *Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area*—(i) *Area*. The Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area includes all Federal waters of the Gulf of Maine, except those designated as right whale critical habitat under 50 CFR 226.203(b), that lie south of 43°15' N. lat. and west of 70°00' W. long. and those waters exempted under paragraph (a)(3) of this section. The Assistant Administrator may change that area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(ii) *Year-round area-specific gear or vessel requirements*. No person or vessel may fish with or possess anchored gillnet gear in the Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal anchored gillnet gear requirements specified in paragraph (d)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements listed in paragraph (d)(6)(ii) of this section for the Other Northeast Gillnet Waters Area, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(6) *Other Northeast Gillnet Waters Area*—(i) *Area*. The Other Northeast Gillnet Waters Area consists of all U.S. waters from the U.S./Canada border to Long Island, NY, at 72°30' W. long. south to 36°33.03' N. lat. and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, with the exception of the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area, Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area, Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area, Great South Channel Sliver Restricted Area, and ex-

empted waters listed in paragraph (a)(3) of this section. The Assistant Administrator may change that area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(ii) *Year-round area-specific gear or vessel requirements*. No person or vessel may fish with or possess anchored gillnet gear in the Other Northeast Gillnet Waters Area that overlaps an area from the U.S./Canada border south to a straight line from 41°18.2' N. lat., 71°51.5' W. long. (Watch Hill Point, RI) south to 40°00' N. lat. and then east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal anchored gillnet gear requirements specified in paragraph (d)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements listed below, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(A) *Buoy line weak links*. All buoys, flotation devices and/or weights (except gillnets, anchors, and leadline woven into the buoy line), such as surface buoys, high flyers, sub-surface buoys, toggles, window weights, etc., must be attached to the buoy line with a weak link placed as close to each individual buoy, flotation device and/or weight as operationally feasible and that meets the following specifications:

(1) The weak link must be chosen from the following list approved by NMFS: Swivels, plastic weak links, rope of appropriate breaking strength, hog rings, rope stapled to a buoy stick, or other materials or devices approved in writing by the Assistant Administrator. A brochure illustrating the techniques for making weak links is available from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region upon request.

(2) The breaking strength of the weak links must not exceed 1,100 lb (499.0 kg).

(3) Weak links must break cleanly leaving behind the bitter end of the line. The bitter end of the line must be free of any knots when the weak link breaks. Splices are not considered to be

knots for the purposes of this provision.

(B) *Net panel weak links.* The breaking strength of each weak link must not exceed 1,100 lb (499.0 kg). The weak link requirements apply to all variations in panel size. All net panels in a string must contain weak links that meet one of the following two configurations:

(1) *Configuration 1.* (i) The weak link must be chosen from the following list approved by NMFS: Plastic weak links or rope of appropriate breaking strength. If rope of appropriate breaking strength is used throughout the floatline or as the up and down line, or if no up and down line is present, then individual weak links are not required on the floatline or up and down line. A brochure illustrating the techniques for making weak links is available from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region upon request; and

(ii) One weak link must be placed in the center of each of the up and down lines at both ends of the net panel; and

(iii) One weak link must be placed as close as possible to each end of the net panels on the floatline; and

(iv) For net panels of 50 fathoms (300 ft or 91.4 m) or less in length, one weak link must be placed in the center of the floatline; or

(v) For net panels greater than 50 fathoms (300 ft or 91.4 m) in length, one weak link must be placed at least every 25 fathoms (150 ft or 45.7 m) along the floatline.

(2) *Configuration 2.* (i) The weak link must be chosen from the following list approved by NMFS: Plastic weak links or rope of appropriate breaking strength. If rope of appropriate breaking strength is used throughout the floatline or as the up and down line, or if no up and down line is present, then individual weak links are not required on the floatline or up and down line. A brochure illustrating the techniques for making weak links is available from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region upon request; and

(ii) One weak link must be placed in the center of each of the up and down lines at both ends of the net panel; and

(iii) One weak link must be placed between the floatline tie loops between net panels; and

(iv) One weak link must be placed where the floatline tie loops attaches to the bridle, buoy line, or groundline at the end of a net string; and

(v) For net panels of 50 fathoms (300 ft or 91.4 m) or less in length, one weak link must be placed in the center of the floatline; or

(vi) For net panels greater than 50 fathoms (300 ft or 91.4 m) in length, one weak link must be placed at least every 25 fathoms (150 ft or 45.7 m) along the floatline.

(C) *Anchoring systems.* All anchored gillnets, regardless of the number of net panels, must be secured at each end of the net string with a burying anchor (an anchor that holds to the ocean bottom through the use of a fluke, spade, plow, or pick) having the holding capacity equal to or greater than a 22-lb (10.0-kg) Danforth-style anchor. Dead weights do not meet this requirement. A brochure illustrating the techniques for rigging anchoring systems is available from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region upon request.

(D) *Groundlines.* On or before October 5, 2008, all groundlines must be composed entirely of sinking line unless exempted from this requirement under paragraph (a)(4) of this section. The attachment of buoys, toggles, or other floatation devices to groundlines is prohibited.

(iii) *Seasonal area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* From September 1 to May 31, no person or vessel may fish with or possess anchored gillnet gear in the Other Northeast Gillnet Waters Area that is south of a straight line from 41°18.2' N. lat., 71°51.5' W. long. (Watch Hill Point, RI) south to 40°00' N. lat. and then east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal anchored gillnet gear requirements specified in paragraph (d)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements listed in paragraphs (d)(6)(ii)(A) through (d)(6)(ii)(D) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. The Assistant Administrator may

revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(7) *Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters*—

(i) *Area.* The Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters consists of all U.S. waters bounded on the north from Long Island, NY, at 72°30' W. long. south to 36°33.03' N. lat. and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, and bounded on the south by 32°00' N. lat., and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ. The Assistant Administrator may change that area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section. When the Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters Area overlaps the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area and its restricted period as specified in paragraphs (f)(1) and (f)(2), then the closure and exemption for the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area as specified in paragraph (f)(2) applies.

(ii) *Area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* From September 1 through May 31, no person or vessel may fish with or possess anchored gillnet gear in the Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal anchored gillnet gear requirements specified in paragraph (d)(1) of this section, and the following area-specific requirements, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section. When the Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters Area overlaps the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area and its restricted period as specified in paragraphs (f)(1) and (f)(2), then the closure and exemption for the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area as specified in paragraph (f)(2) applies.

(A) *Buoy line weak links.* All buoys, flotation devices and/or weights (except gillnets, anchors, and leadline woven into the buoy line), such as surface buoys, high flyers, sub-surface buoys, toggles, window weights, etc., must be attached to the buoy line with a weak link placed as close to each individual buoy, flotation device and/or weight as operationally feasible and that meets the following specifications:

(1) The weak link must be chosen from the following list approved by

NMFS: Swivels, plastic weak links, rope of appropriate breaking strength, hog rings, rope stapled to a buoy stick, or other materials or devices approved in writing by the Assistant Administrator. A brochure illustrating the techniques for making weak links is available from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region upon request.

(2) The breaking strength of the weak links must not exceed 1,100 lb (499.0 kg).

(3) Weak links must break cleanly leaving behind the bitter end of the line. The bitter end of the line must be free of any knots when the weak link breaks. Splices are not considered to be knots for the purposes of this provision.

(B) *Net panel weak links.* The weak link requirements apply to all variations in panel size. All net panels must contain weak links that meet the following specifications:

(1) The breaking strength for each of the weak links must not exceed 1,100 lb (499.0 kg).

(2) The weak link must be chosen from the following list approved by NMFS: Plastic weak links or rope of appropriate breaking strength. If rope of appropriate breaking strength is used throughout the floatline then individual weak links are not required. A brochure illustrating the techniques for making weak links is available from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region upon request.

(3) Weak links must be placed in the center of the floatline of each gillnet net panel up to and including 50 fathoms (300 ft or 91.4 m) in length, or at least every 25 fathoms (150 ft or 45.7 m) along the floatline for longer panels.

(C) *Additional anchoring system and net panel weak link requirements.* All gillnets must return to port with the vessel unless the gear meets the following specifications:

(1) *Anchoring systems.* All anchored gillnets, regardless of the number of net panels, must be secured at each end of the net string with a burying anchor (an anchor that holds to the ocean bottom through the use of a fluke, spade, plow, or pick) having the holding capacity equal to or greater than a 22-lb (10.0-kg) Danforth-style anchor. Dead

weights do not meet this requirement. A brochure illustrating the techniques for rigging anchoring systems is available from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region upon request.

(2) *Net panel weak links.* Net panel weak links must meet the specifications in this paragraph. The breaking strength of each weak link must not exceed 1,100 lb (499.0 kg). The weak link requirements apply to all variations in panel size. All net panels in a string must contain weak links that meet one of the following two configurations found in paragraph (d)(6)(ii)(B)(1) or (d)(6)(ii)(B)(2) of this section.

(3) *Additional provision for North Carolina.* All gillnets set 300 yards (274.3 m) or less from the shoreline in North Carolina must meet the anchoring system and net panel weak link requirements in paragraphs (d)(7)(ii)(C)(1) and (d)(7)(ii)(C)(2) of this section, or the following:

(i) The entire net string must be less than 300 yards (274.3 m) from shore.

(ii) The breaking strength of each weak link must not exceed 600 lb (272.2 kg). The weak link requirements apply to all variations in panel size.

(iii) All net panels in a string must contain weak links that meet one of the following two configuration specifications found in paragraph (d)(6)(ii)(B)(1) or (d)(6)(ii)(B)(2) of this section.

(iv) Regardless of the number of net panels, all anchored gillnets must be secured at the offshore end of the net string with a burying anchor (an anchor that holds to the ocean bottom through the use of a fluke, spade, plow, or pick) having a holding capacity equal to or greater than an 8-lb (3.6-kg) Danforth-style anchor, and at the inshore end of the net string with a dead weight equal to or greater than 31 lb (14.1 kg).

(D) *Groundlines.* On or before October 5, 2008, all groundlines must be composed entirely of sinking line unless exempted from this requirement under paragraph (a)(4) of this section. The attachment of buoys, toggles, or other floatation devices to groundlines is prohibited.

(8) [Reserved]

(e) *Restrictions applicable to drift gillnet gear—(1) Cape Cod Bay Restricted*

Area—(i) Area. The Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area consists of the Cape Cod Bay right whale critical habitat area specified under 50 CFR 226.203(b), unless the Assistant Administrator changes that area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(ii) *Closure during the winter restricted period—(A) Winter restricted period.* The winter restricted period for this area is from January 1 through May 15 of each year, unless the Assistant Administrator changes that period in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(B) *Closure.* During the winter restricted period, no person or vessel may fish with or possess drift gillnet gear in the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area unless the Assistant Administrator specifies gear restrictions or alternative fishing practices in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section and the gear or practices comply with those specifications, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. The Assistant Administrator may waive this closure for the remaining portion of the winter restricted period in any year through a notification in the FEDERAL REGISTER if NMFS determines that right whales have left the restricted area and are unlikely to return for the remainder of the season.

(iii) *Area-specific gear or vessel requirements for the other restricted period—(A) Other restricted period.* The other restricted period for the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area is from May 16 through December 31 of each year unless the Assistant Administrator changes that period in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(B) *Area specific gear or vessel requirements.* During the other restricted period, no person or vessel may fish with or possess drift gillnet gear in the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. Additionally, no person or vessel may fish with or possess drift gillnet gear at night in the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area during the other restricted period unless that gear is tended, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. During that time, all drift gillnet gear set by

that vessel in the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area must be removed from the water and stowed on board the vessel before a vessel returns to port. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(2) *Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area*—(i) *Area*. The Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area consists of the area bounded by lines connecting the following four points: 41°02.2' N. lat./69°02' W. long., 41°43.5' N. lat./69°36.3' W. long., 42°10' N. lat./68°31' W. long., and 41°38' N. lat./68°13' W. long. This area includes most of the Great South Channel right whale critical habitat area specified under 50 CFR 226.203(a), with the exception of the sliver along the western boundary described in paragraph (e)(3)(i) of this section. The Assistant Administrator may change that area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(ii) *Closure during the spring restricted period*—(A) *Spring restricted period*. The spring restricted period for the Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area is from April 1 through June 30 of each year unless the Assistant Administrator changes that period in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(B) *Closure*. During the spring restricted period, no person or vessel may set, fish with or possess drift gillnet gear in the Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area unless the Assistant Administrator specifies gear restrictions or alternative fishing practices in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section and the gear or practices comply with those specifications, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2.

(iii) *Area-specific gear or vessel requirements for the other restricted period*—(A) *Other restricted period*. The other restricted period for the Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area is from July 1 through March 31 of each year unless the Assistant Administrator changes that period in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(B) *Area-specific gear or vessel requirements*. During the other restricted period, no person or vessel may fish with or possess drift gillnet gear in the Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area unless that gear complies

with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. Additionally, no person or vessel may fish with or possess drift gillnet gear at night in the Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area unless that gear is tended, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. During that time, all drift gillnet gear set by that vessel in the Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area must be removed from the water and stowed on board the vessel before a vessel returns to port. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(3) *Great South Channel Sliver Restricted Area*—(i) *Area*. The Great South Channel Sliver Restricted Area consists of the area bounded by lines connecting the following points: 41°02.2' N. lat./69°02' W. long., 41°43.5' N. lat./69°36.3' W. long., 41°40' N. lat./69°45' W. long., and 41°00' N. lat./69°05' W. long. The Assistant Administrator may change that area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(ii) *Year-round area-specific gear or vessel requirements*. No person or vessel may fish with or possess drift gillnet gear in the Great South Channel Sliver Restricted Gillnet Area unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. Additionally, no person or vessel may fish with or possess drift gillnet gear at night in the Great South Channel Sliver Restricted Area unless that gear is tended, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. During that time, all drift gillnet gear set by that vessel in the Great South Channel Sliver Restricted Area must be removed from the water and stowed on board the vessel before a vessel returns to port. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(4) *Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area*—(i) *Area*. The Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area includes all Federal waters of the Gulf of Maine, except those designated as right whale critical habitat under 50 CFR 226.203(b), that lie south of 43°15'

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N. lat. and west of 70°00' W. long. The Assistant Administrator may change that area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(ii) *Year-round area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* No person or vessel may fish with or possess drift gillnet gear in the Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. Additionally, no person or vessel may fish with or possess drift gillnet gear at night in the Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Area unless that gear is tended, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. During that time, all drift gillnet gear set by that vessel in the Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area must be removed from the water and stowed on board the vessel before a vessel returns to port. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(5) *Other Northeast Gillnet Waters Area*—(i) *Area.* The Other Northeast Gillnet Waters Area consists of all U.S. waters from the U.S./Canada border to Long Island, NY, at 72°30' W. long. south to 36°33.03' N. lat. and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, with the exception of the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area, Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area, Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area, Great South Channel Sliver Restricted Area, and exempted waters listed in paragraph (a)(3) of this section. The Assistant Administrator may change that area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(ii) *Year-round area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* No person or vessel may fish with or possess drift gillnet gear in the Other Northeast Gillnet Waters Area unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. Additionally, no person or vessel may fish with or possess drift gillnet gear at night in the Other Northeast Gillnet Waters Area unless that gear is tended, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. During that time, all drift gillnet

gear set by that vessel in the Other Northeast Gillnet Waters Area must be removed from the water and stowed on board the vessel before a vessel returns to port. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(iii) *Seasonal area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* From September 1 to May 31, no person or vessel may fish with or possess drift gillnet gear in the Other Northeast Gillnet Waters Area that is south of a straight line from 41°18.2' N. lat., 71°51.5' W. long. (Watch Hill Point, RI) south to 40°00' N. lat. and then east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in §§ 229.2. Additionally, no person or vessel may fish with or possess drift gillnet gear at night in the Other Northeast Gillnet Waters Area unless that gear is tended, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. During that time, all drift gillnet gear set by that vessel in the Other Northeast Gillnet Waters Area must be removed from the water and stowed on board the vessel before a vessel returns to port. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(6) *Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters Area*—(i) *Area.* The Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters consists of all U.S. waters bounded on the north from Long Island, NY at 72°30' W. long. south to 36°33.03' N. lat. and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, and bounded on the south by 32°00' N. lat., and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ. The Assistant Administrator may change that area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section. When the Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters Area overlaps the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area and its restricted period as specified in paragraphs (f)(1) and (f)(2), then the closure and exemption for the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area as specified in paragraph (f)(2) applies.

(ii) *Area-specific gear or vessel requirements.* From September 1 through May 31, no person or vessel may fish with or possess drift gillnet gear at night in the Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters

Area unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. During that time, no person may fish with or possess drift gillnet gear at night in the Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters Area unless that gear is tended, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. During that time, all drift gillnet gear set by that vessel in the Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters Area must be removed from the water and stowed on board the vessel before a vessel returns to port. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section. When the Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters Area overlaps the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area and its restricted period as specified in paragraphs (f)(1) and (f)(2), then the closure and exemption for the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area as specified in paragraph (f)(2) applies.

(7) [Reserved]

(f) *Restrictions applicable to the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area—(1) Area.* The Southeast U.S. Restricted Area consists of the area bounded by straight lines connecting the following points in the order stated from south to north, unless the Assistant Administrator changes that area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section:

Point	N. lat.	W. long.
SERA1	27°51'	(1)
SERA2	27°51'	80°00'
SERA3	32°00'	80°00'
SERA4	32°36'	78°52'
SERA5	32°51'	78°36'
SERA6	33°15'	78°24'
SERA7	33°27'	78°04'
SERA8	(2)	78°33.9'

¹ Florida shoreline.

² South Carolina shoreline.

(i) *Southeast U.S. Restricted Area N.* The Southeast U.S. Restricted Area N consists of the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area from 29°00' N. lat. northward.

(ii) *Southeast U.S. Restricted Area S.* The Southeast U.S. Restricted Area S consists of the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area southward of 29°00' N. lat.

(2) *Restricted periods, closure, and exemptions—(i) Restricted periods.* The restricted period for the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area N is from November 15

through April 15, and the restricted period for the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area S is from December 1 through March 31, unless the Assistant Administrator revises the restricted period in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(ii) *Closure for gillnets.* (A) Except as provided under paragraph (f)(2)(v) of this section, fishing with or possessing gillnet in the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area N during the restricted period is prohibited.

(B) Except as provided under paragraph (f)(2)(iii) of this section and (f)(2)(iv) of this section, fishing with gillnet in the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area S during the restricted period is prohibited.

(iii) *Exemption for Southeastern U.S. Atlantic shark gillnet fishery.* Fishing with gillnet for sharks with webbing of 5 inches (12.7 cm) or greater stretched mesh is exempt from the restrictions under paragraph (f)(2)(ii)(B) if:

(A) The gillnet is deployed so that it encloses an area of water;

(B) A valid commercial directed shark limited access permit has been issued to the vessel in accordance with 50 CFR 635.4(e) and is on board;

(C) No net is set at night or when visibility is less than 500 yards (1,500 ft, 460 m);

(D) The gillnet is removed from the water before night or immediately if visibility decreases below 500 yards (1,500 ft, 460 m);

(E) Each set is made under the observation of a spotter plane;

(F) No gillnet is set within 3 nautical miles (5.6 km) of a right, humpback, or fin whale;

(G) The gillnet is removed immediately from the water if a right, humpback, or fin whale moves within 3 nautical miles (5.6 km) of the set gear;

(H) The gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section; and

(I) The operator of the vessel calls the Southeast Fisheries Science Center Panama City Laboratory in Panama City, FL, not less than 48 hours prior to departing on any fishing trip in order to arrange for observer coverage. If the Panama City Laboratory requests that an observer be taken on board a vessel during a fishing trip at

any time from December 1 through March 31 south of 29°00' N. lat., no person may fish with such gillnet aboard that vessel in the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area S unless an observer is on board that vessel during the trip.

(iv) *Exemption for Spanish Mackerel component of the Southeast Atlantic gillnet fishery.* Fishing with gillnet for Spanish mackerel is exempt from the restrictions under paragraph (f)(2)(ii)(B) from December 1 through December 31, and from March 1 through March 31 if:

(A) Gillnet mesh size is between 3.5 inches (8.9 cm) and 4 ⁷/₈ inches (12.4 cm) stretched mesh;

(B) A valid commercial vessel permit for Spanish mackerel has been issued to the vessel in accordance with 50 CFR 622.4(a)(2)(iv) and is on board;

(C) No person may fish with, set, place in the water, or have on board a vessel a gillnet with a float line longer than 800 yards (2,400 ft, 732 m);

(D) No person may fish with, set, or place in the water more than one gillnet at any time;

(E) No more than two gillnets, including any net in use, may be possessed at any one time; provided, however, that if two gillnets, including any net in use, are possessed at any one time, they must have stretched mesh sizes (as allowed under the regulations) that differ by at least .25 inch (.64 cm);

(F) No person may soak a gillnet for more than 1 hour. The soak period begins when the first mesh is placed in the water and ends either when the first mesh is retrieved back on board the vessel or the gathering of the gillnet is begun to facilitate retrieval on board the vessel, whichever occurs first; providing that, once the first mesh is retrieved or the gathering is begun, the retrieval is continuous until the gillnet is completely removed from the water;

(G) No net is set at night or when visibility is less than 500 yards (1,500 ft, 460 m);

(H) The gillnet is removed from the water before night or immediately if visibility decreases below 500 yards (1,500 ft, 460 m);

(I) No net is set within 3 nautical miles (5.6 km) of a right, humpback, or fin whale;

(J) The gillnet is removed immediately from the water if a right, humpback, or fin whale moves within 3 nautical miles (5.6 km) of the set gear; and

(K) The gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal anchored gillnet gear requirements specified in paragraph (d)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements for anchored gillnets specified in paragraphs (d)(7)(ii)(A) through (d)(7)(ii)(D) of this section for the Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters.

(v) *Exemption for vessels in transit with gillnet aboard.* Possession of gillnet aboard a vessel in transit is exempt from the restrictions under paragraph (f)(2)(ii)(A) of this section if: All nets are covered with canvas or other similar material and lashed or otherwise securely fastened to the deck, rail, or drum; and all buoys, high flyers, and anchors are disconnected from all gillnets. No fish may be possessed aboard such a vessel in transit.

(vi) [Reserved]

(g) *Restrictions applicable to the Other Southeast Gillnet Waters Area—(1) Area.* The Other Southeast Gillnet Waters Area consists of the area from 32°00' N. lat. (near Savannah, GA) south to 27°51' N. lat. for the Southeast Atlantic gillnet fishery, and from 32°00' N. lat. south to 26°46.50' N. lat. (near West Palm Beach, FL) for the Southeastern U.S. Atlantic shark gillnet fishery, and extending from 80°00' W. long. east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, for both the Southeast Atlantic gillnet and Southeastern U.S. Atlantic gillnet fisheries unless the Assistant Administrator changes this area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(2) *Restrictions for Southeastern U.S. Atlantic shark gillnet fishery.* No person or vessel may fish with or possess gillnet gear for shark with webbing of 5 inches (12.7 cm) or greater stretched mesh in the Other Southeast Gillnet Waters Area north of 29°00' N. lat. (near New Smyrna Beach, FL) from November 15 through April 15 and south of 29°00' N. lat. from December 1 through March 31 unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, and the set restrictions listed

below, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(i) *Set restrictions.* All gillnets must comply with the following set restrictions:

(A) No net is set within 3 nautical miles (5.6 km) of a right, humpback, or fin whale; and

(B) If a right, humpback, or fin whale moves within 3 nautical miles (5.6 km) of the set gear, the gear is removed immediately from the water.

(3) *Restrictions for Southeast Atlantic gillnet fishery.* No person or vessel may fish with or possess gillnet gear in the Other Southeast Gillnet Waters Area, except as provided in paragraph (g)(2) of this section, north of 29°00' N. lat. from November 15 through April 15 and south of 29°00' N. lat. from December 1 through March 31 unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in paragraph (b) of this section, the universal anchored gillnet gear requirements specified in paragraph (d)(1) of this section, and the area-specific requirements for anchored gillnets specified in paragraphs (d)(7)(ii)(A) through (d)(7)(ii)(D) of this section for the Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(4) [Reserved]

(h) *Restrictions applicable to the Southeast U.S. Monitoring Area—(1) Area.* The Southeast U.S. Monitoring Area consists of the area from 27°51' N. lat. (near Sebastian Inlet, FL) south to 26°46.50' N. lat. (near West Palm Beach, FL), extending from the shoreline or exemption line out to 80°00' W. long., unless the Assistant Administrator changes that area in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(2) *Restrictions for Southeastern U.S. Atlantic shark gillnet fishery.* No person or vessel may fish with or possess gillnet gear for shark with webbing of 5 inches (12.7 cm) or greater stretched mesh in the Southeast U.S. Monitoring Area from December 1 through March 31 unless that gear complies with the gear marking requirements specified in

paragraph (b) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2, and the person or vessel satisfies the vessel monitoring system and observer requirements listed below. The Assistant Administrator may revise these requirements in accordance with paragraph (i) of this section.

(i) *Vessel monitoring systems.* No person or vessel may fish with or possess gillnet gear for shark with webbing of 5 inches (12.7 cm) or greater stretched mesh in the Southeast U.S. Monitoring Area during the restricted period unless the operator of the vessel is in compliance with the vessel monitoring system (VMS) requirements found in 50 CFR 635.69.

(ii) *At-sea observer coverage.* When selected, vessels are required to take observers on a mandatory basis in compliance with the requirements for at-sea observer coverage found in 50 CFR 229.7. Any vessel that fails to carry an observer once selected is prohibited from fishing pursuant to 50 CFR part 635.

(iii) [Reserved]

(i) *Other provisions.* In addition to any other emergency authority under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, or other appropriate authority, the Assistant Administrator may take action under this section in the following situations:

(1) *Entanglements in critical habitat or restricted areas.* If a serious injury or mortality of a right whale occurs in the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area from January 1 through May 15, in the Great South Channel Restricted Area from April 1 through June 30, the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area N from November 15 to April 15, or the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area S from December 1 through March 31 as the result of an entanglement by trap/pot or gillnet gear allowed to be used in those areas and times, the Assistant Administrator shall close that area to that gear type (i.e., trap/pot or gillnet) for the rest of that time period and for that same time period in each subsequent year,

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unless the Assistant Administrator revises the restricted period in accordance with paragraph (i)(2) of this section or unless other measures are implemented under paragraph (i)(2) of this section.

(2) *Other special measures.* The Assistant Administrator may revise the requirements of this section through a publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER if:

- (i) NMFS verifies that certain gear characteristics are both operationally effective and reduce serious injuries and mortalities of endangered whales;
- (ii) New gear technology is developed and determined to be appropriate;
- (iii) Revised breaking strengths are determined to be appropriate;
- (iv) New marking systems are developed and determined to be appropriate;
- (v) NMFS determines that right whales are remaining longer than expected in a closed area or have left earlier than expected;
- (vi) NMFS determines that the boundaries of a closed area are not appropriate;
- (vii) Gear testing operations are considered appropriate; or
- (viii) Similar situations occur.

(3) *Seasonal Area Management (SAM) Program.* Until October 6, 2008, in addition to existing requirements for vessels deploying anchored gillnet or trap/pot gear in the Other Northeast Gillnet Waters, Northern Inshore State Trap/Pot Waters, Trap/Pot Waters, Offshore Trap/Pot Waters, Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area (July 1 through July 31), Great South Channel Sliver Restricted Area (May 1 through July 31), Great South Channel Restricted Trap/Pot Area (July 1 through July 31), and Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area (anchored gillnet and trap/pot area) found at § 229.32 (b)–(d), a vessel may fish in the SAM Areas as described in paragraphs (i)(3)(i)(A) and (i)(3)(ii)(A) of this section, which overlay the previously mentioned areas, provided the gear or vessel complies with the requirements specified in paragraphs (i)(3)(i)(B) and (i)(3)(ii)(B) of this section during the times specified in those paragraphs. These requirements are in addition to requirements found in § 229.32 (b)–(d). The requirements in (i)(3)(i)(B) and (i)(3)(ii)(B) of

this section supercede requirements found at § 229.32 (b)–(d) when the former are more restrictive than the latter. For example, the closures applicable to trap/pot and gillnet gear in the Great South Channel found in paragraphs (c)(3)(ii) and (d)(3)(ii) of this section are more restrictive than the gear modifications described in this section and, therefore, supercede them. A copy of a chart depicting these areas is available upon request from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region, 1 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930.

(i) *SAM West—(A) Area.* SAM West consists of all waters bounded by straight lines connecting the following points in the order stated:

SAM WEST		
Point	N. lat.	W. long
1W	42°30'	70°30'
2W	42°30'	69°24'
3W	41°48.9'	69°24'
4W	41°40'	69°45'
5W	41°40'	69°57'
and along the eastern shoreline of Cape Cod to		
6W	42°04.8'	70°10'
7W	42°12'	70°15'
8W	42°12'	70°30'

(B) *Gear or vessel requirements.* Unless otherwise authorized by the Assistant Administrator, in accordance with paragraph (i)(2) of this section, from March 1 through April 30, no person or vessel may fish with or possess anchored gillnet or trap/pot gear in SAM West unless that gear complies with the following gear modifications, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2.

(i) *Anchored gillnet gear—(i) Groundlines.* All groundlines must be made entirely of sinking line. Floating groundlines are prohibited. The attachment of buoys, toggles, or other flotation devices to groundlines is prohibited.

(ii) *Buoy lines.* All buoy lines must be composed of sinking line except the bottom portion of the line, which may be a section of floating line not to exceed one-third the overall length of the buoy line.

(iii) *Buoy line weak links.* All buoys, flotation devices and/or weights (except gillnets, anchors, and leadline woven into the buoy line), such as surface buoys, high flyers, sub-surface buoys, toggles, window weights, etc.,

must be attached to the buoy line with a weak link placed as close to each individual buoy, flotation device and/or weight as operationally feasible that has a maximum breaking strength of 1,100 lb (499.0 kg). The weak link must be chosen from the following list approved by NMFS: Swivels, plastic weak links, rope of appropriate breaking strength, hog rings, rope stapled to a buoy stick, or other materials or devices approved in writing by the Assistant Administrator. Weak links must break cleanly leaving behind the bitter end of the line. The bitter end of the line must be free of any knots when the weak link breaks. Splices are not considered to be knots for the purposes of this provision. A brochure illustrating the techniques for making weak links is available from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region upon request.

(iv) *Net panel weak links.* The breaking strength of each weak link must not exceed 1,100 lb (499.0 kg). The weak link requirements apply to all variations in panel size. All net panels in a string must contain weak links that meet one of the following two configuration specifications found in paragraph (d)(6)(ii)(B)(1) or (d)(6)(ii)(B)(2) of this section.

(v) *Anchoring systems.* All anchored gillnets, regardless of the number of net panels, must be secured at each end of the net string with a burying anchor (an anchor that holds to the ocean bottom through the use of a fluke, spade, plow, or pick) having the holding capacity equal to or greater than a 22-lb (10.0-kg) Danforth-style anchor. Dead weights do not meet this requirement. A brochure illustrating the techniques for rigging anchoring systems is available from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region upon request.

(2) *Trap/pot gear—(i) Groundlines.* All groundlines must be made entirely of sinking line. Floating groundlines are prohibited. The attachment of buoys, toggles, or other flotation devices to groundlines is prohibited.

(ii) *Buoy lines.* All buoy lines must be composed of sinking line except the bottom portion of the line, which may be a section of floating line not to exceed one-third the overall length of the buoy line.

(iii) *Northern Inshore State Trap/Pot Waters, Northern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters Areas, Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area, and Great South Channel Restricted Trap/Pot Area (that overlaps with LMA 2 and Outer Cape LMA only) buoy line weak links.* All buoys, flotation devices, and/or weights (except traps/pots, anchors, and leadline woven into the buoy line), such as surface buoys, high flyers, sub-surface buoys, toggles, window weights, etc., must be attached to the buoy line with a weak link placed as close to each individual buoy, flotation device, and/or weight as operationally feasible that has a maximum breaking strength of up to 600 lb (272.2 kg). The weak link must be chosen from the following list approved by NMFS: Swivels, plastic weak links, rope of appropriate breaking strength, hog rings, rope stapled to a buoy stick, or other materials or devices approved in writing by the Assistant Administrator. Weak links must break cleanly leaving behind the bitter end of the line. The bitter end of the line must be free of any knots when the weak link breaks. Splices are not considered to be knots for the purposes of this provision. A brochure illustrating the techniques for making weak links is available from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region upon request.

(iv) *Offshore Trap/Pot Waters Area and Great South Channel Restricted Trap/Pot Area (that overlaps with LMA 2/3 Overlap and LMA 3 only) buoy line weak links.* All buoys, flotation devices, and/or weights (except traps/pots, anchors, and leadline woven into the buoy line), such as surface buoys, high flyers, sub-surface buoys, toggles, window weights, etc., must be attached to the buoy line with a weak link placed as close to each individual buoy, flotation device, and/or weight as operationally feasible that has a maximum breaking strength of up to 1,500 lb (680.4 kg). The weak link must be chosen from the following list approved by NMFS: swivels, plastic weak links, rope of appropriate breaking strength, hog rings, rope stapled to a buoy stick, or other materials or devices approved in writing by the Assistant Administrator. Weak links must break cleanly leaving behind the bitter end of the line. The bitter end of

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the line must be free of any knots when the weak link breaks. Splices are not considered to be knots for the purposes of this provision. A brochure illustrating the techniques for making weak links is available from the Regional Administrator, NMFS, Northeast Region upon request.

(ii) *SAM East—(A) Area.* SAM East consists of all waters bounded by straight lines connecting the following points in the order stated:

SAM EAST

Point	N. Lat.	W. Long.
1E	42°30'	69°45'
2E	42°30'	67°27'
3E	42°09'	67°08.4'
4E	41°00'	69°05'
5E	41°40'	69°45'

(B) *Gear or vessel requirements.* Unless otherwise authorized by the Assistant Administrator, in accordance with paragraph (i)(2) of this section, from May 1 through July 31, no person or vessel may fish with or possess anchored gillnet or trap/pot gear in SAM East unless that gear complies with the gear modifications found in paragraphs (i)(3)(i)(B)(1) and (i)(3)(i)(B)(2) of this section, or unless the gear is stowed as specified in § 229.2.

[72 FR 57181, Oct. 5, 2007, as amended at 73 FR 51241, Oct. 2, 2008]

§ 229.33 Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Plan Regulations—New England.

(a) *Restrictions—(1) Northeast Closure Area—(i) Area restrictions.* From August 15 through September 13, it is prohibited to fish with, set, haul back, possess on board a vessel unless stowed in accordance with § 229.2, or fail to remove sink gillnet gear or gillnet gear capable of catching multispecies from the Northeast Closure Area. This restriction does not apply to vessels fishing with a single pelagic gillnet (as described and used as set forth in § 648.81(f)(2)(ii) of this title).

(ii) *Area boundaries.* The Northeast Closure Area is bounded by straight lines connecting the following points in the order stated:

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NORTHEAST CLOSURE AREA

Point	N. Lat.	W. Long.
NE1	44°27.3'	68°55.0' (ME shoreline)
NE2	43°29.6'	68°55.0'
NE3	44°04.4'	67°48.7'
NE4	44°06.9'	67°52.8'
NE5	44°31.2'	67°02.7'
NE6	44°45.8'	67°02.7' (ME shoreline)

(2) *Mid-Coast Management Area—(i) Area restrictions.* From September 15 through May 31, it is prohibited to fish with, set, haul back, possess on board a vessel unless stowed in accordance with § 229.2, or fail to remove sink gillnet gear or gillnet gear capable of catching multispecies from the Mid-Coast Management Area, unless the gillnet gear is equipped with pingers in accordance with paragraphs (b) and (c) of this section. This prohibition does not apply to vessels fishing with a single pelagic gillnet (as described and used as set forth in § 648.81(f)(2)(ii) of this title).

(ii) *Area boundaries.* The Mid-Coast Management Area is the area bounded by straight lines connecting the following points in the order stated:

MID-COAST MANAGEMENT AREA

Point	N. Lat.	W. Long.
MC1	42°30.0'	70°50.1' (MA shoreline)
MC2	42°30.0'	70°15.0'
MC3	42°40.0'	70°15.0'
MC4	42°40.0'	70°00.0'
MC5	43°00.0'	70°00.0'
MC6	43°00.0'	69°30.0'
MC7	43°30.0'	69°30.0'
MC8	43°30.0'	69°00.0'
MC9	44°17.8'	69°00.0' (ME shoreline)

(iii) *Closing procedures.* According to paragraphs (d)(1), (d)(3), and (d)(4) of this section, NMFS shall close the western portion of the Mid-Coast Management Area (west of 70°15' W. long.) from October 1 through November 30 annually by incorporating it into the Coastal Gulf of Maine Closure Area if, after two full, consecutive management seasons, the average observed bycatch rate of harbor porpoises for the Mid-Coast, Massachusetts Bay, and Stellwagen Bank Management Areas combined exceeds the target harbor