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August 31, 2021

## Pot/Trap Fisheries Regulations to Help Save North Atlantic Right Whales Announced

NOAA Fisheries and our partners are dedicated to conserving and rebuilding the [North Atlantic right whale](#) population, which is endangered, declining, and experiencing an ongoing [Unusual Mortality Event](#).

Entanglement in commercial fishing gear is a primary cause of mortalities and serious injuries of North Atlantic right whales. Working with the [Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team](#)—a group of advisors consisting of fishermen, scientists, conservationists, and state and federal officials—we have completed Phase 1 of the modifications to the [Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan](#) to continue to reduce whale entanglements.

Today, we are announcing the final rule to modify the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan. The gear modifications required by the rule will go into effect May 1, 2022, which is the start of the American lobster/Jonah crab fishing year. The changes to the seasonally restricted areas will go into effect 30 days after the publication of this rule.

We would like to thank the many stakeholders who submitted more than 200,000 public comments on the proposed rule. The comments guided us in modifying the final rule to allow more flexibility for fishermen, while still achieving the necessary risk reduction to make a real difference for right whales. These measures will reduce the

deaths and serious injuries to North Atlantic right whales due to entanglements in U.S. commercial fishing gear, and will contribute to the recovery of this endangered population.

## Final Rule Measures

The rule modifies regulations for the Northeast lobster and Jonah crab trap/pot fisheries as follows:

- Modify gear marking to introduce state-specific colors for gear marks and increase the number of gear markings and areas requiring marked lines.
- Modify gear configurations to reduce the number of vertical lines by requiring more traps between buoy lines.
- Require weak insertions or weak rope in buoy lines.
- Modify existing seasonal closure/restricted areas to allow ropeless fishing.
- Add two new seasonal restricted areas.
- Following changes made by Massachusetts, extend the Massachusetts Restricted Area (MRA) to add state waters north to the New Hampshire border.

## For More Information

For more information on the rule's specific measures and to see outreach guides and videos please visit the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan [website](#), or read our [web story](#).

## Questions?

Industry: Contact [Marisa Trego](#), Take Reduction Team Coordinator, 978-282-8484

Media: Contact [Allison Ferreira](#), Regional Office, 978-281-9103

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