



TRAWLWORKS, INC.

Trawls and Netting • Trawl Doors • Hardware and Wire

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Mr. Terry Alexander
NEFMC Law Enforcement Committee
67 Grove Lane
Harpwell, Maine 04079

June 13, 2016

Dear Mr. Alexander,

I apologize for not being able to make it to the NEFMC meeting on Wednesday, June 15, in person, but I am sending this letter in regards to codend enforcement that I hope the committee will take into consideration.

As you well know, the enforcement of codend mesh size has been a hotly debated issue for a long time and I have correspondence dating back to 2006 discussing measuring methods, twine shrinkage, manufacturing methods, wedge shaped gauges versus electronic gauges, etc. Fishing boats are boarded by the Coast Guard and can be written up for a violation if the codend measures less than what the law requires for a particular fishery. I have had customers written up for codends measuring an average of 6.49" instead of the required 6.5". If people are going to intentionally violate the law it tends to be more blatant than that.

I can attest to the fact that as a trawl manufacturer and purveyor of codends and webbing, Trawlworks is very aware of the mesh size rules and very vigilant about the mesh sizes that we have in stock to sell. Our bales of polyethylene webbing generally come from a factory in Portugal where they are officially measured before being shipped to us. We measure all the bales of codend material before they leave the shop, and are sure that when a customer orders a codend of a particular size, that is what they receive.

That being said, the committee needs to understand that no man-made material is static. With use the size of these materials can be affected by a number of factors. The location of the webbing in the codend and the resulting strain on the strands can have an effect on mesh size. Sediment can build up in the strands and as the twine gains sediment it increases the diameter resulting in shrinkage in length. All man-made materials are affected by sunlight. The fact that the codend is normally stored on the top of the net drum means that it is constantly exposed to UV light which can also cause shrinkage issues.

Codends are expensive and because fishermen do not want to risk getting a violation, they will often buy new codends more frequently than might be necessary. Could there be a way to remedy this situation and make it easier for the fishermen and the Coast Guard when it comes to codend enforcement? Why couldn't a steel band, similar to the bands used to tag birds, be stamped with a date of purchase and a mesh size and then be attached to the gore of the codend? The stamped band would signify that the codend was legal at the time of purchase and would be considered legal for a determined length of time, say 18 months, after which time the codend would need to be replaced. A system like this might alleviate

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some of the stress of being boarded because the stamped band would ensure that the boat was compliant with the mesh size rule. It would also benefit the Coast Guard because they could just look at the date and size stamped on the band to verify whether the codend was acceptable.

This is just a basic idea about how it might be possible to make codend enforcement easier on all parties involved. I hope that perhaps it could be a starting point for further discussion. I appreciate your taking the time to read my comments on this matter.

Sincerely,

Mary E. O'Rourke