

DECISION DOCUMENT

Joint Omnibus Alternative Gear-Marking Framework Adjustment



This document was developed to help the Council select preferred alternatives for the Joint Omnibus Alternative Gear-Marking Framework Adjustment.

September 19, 2025 – Version I

Anticipated Council Action:

1. Prior to selecting preferred alternatives, the Council will receive a presentation on measures under consideration and their analyzed impacts on fishery resources, protected resources, the physical environment (EFH), and human communities (economic and social impacts) in the Joint Omnibus Alternative Gear-Marking Framework. The development of this framework action was led by the Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office, in coordination with the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils.
2. Select the *preferred alternative* for Alternative Set 1 – Authorization of approved gear-marking alternatives (Section 4.1).
3. Select the *preferred alternative* for Alternative Set 2 – Requirements to use approved gear-marking alternatives (Section 4.2).
4. Motion to submit the Joint Omnibus Alternative Gear-Marking Framework to NOAA Fisheries. The Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council is expected to take final action on this framework action in October 2025.

4.1 – Alternative Set 1 – Authorization of approved gear-marking alternatives

Section 4.1 – Alternative Set 1 – Authorization of approved gear-marking alternatives <i>Choose one.</i>	
Alternative 1A	No Action This alternative would not allow for alternative gear marking and would maintain current surface marking requirements (radar reflectors, highflyers, etc.).
Alternative 1B	Region-wide alternative gear marking This alternative would allow the use of alternative gear marking for fixed-gear fishing in all Federal waters within the Greater Atlantic Region.
Alternative 1C	Spatially and temporally limited alternative gear marking This alternative would allow alternative gear marking during, and within, persistent buoy line restricted areas established by the TRP.
Alternative 1D	Spatially limited alternative gear marking This alternative would allow alternative gear marking within persistent buoy line restricted areas established by the TRP during restriction periods and in the same geographical areas when restriction periods are not in place.
Decisions/Questions/Information to Consider	
• No alternatives would require the use of alternatively-marked fishing gear. • Alternatives 1C and 1D would apply to current and future persistent buoy line restricted areas established by the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (TRP). • See Advisory Panel, On-Demand Fishing Gear Conflict Working Group, and public feedback on the action in the NEFMC staff presentation and meeting summaries (as available). ○ September 3, 2025 Groundfish & Recreational Advisory Panels ○ September 12, 2025 Scallop Advisory Panel ○ September 16, 2025 Monkfish & Skate Advisory Panels ○ August 26, 2025 On-Demand Fishing Gear Conflict Working Group ○ August 26, 2025 Alternative Gear-Marking Framework Public Engagement Session • Note: these groups received presentations on the framework but did not identify a preferred alternative for Alternative Set 1.	
Other important Considerations/Draft EA References	
• Impacts on Fishery Resources: Section 6.2.1 • Impacts on Protected Species: Section 6.3.1 • Impacts on Physical Environment and Essential Fish Habitat: Section 6.4.1 • Impacts on Human Communities: 6.5.1	

4.2 – Alternative Set 2 – Requirements to use approved gear-marking alternatives

Section 4.2 – Alternative Set 2 – Requirements to use approved gear-marking alternatives <i>If alternatives 1B, 1C, or 1D are selected under alternative set 1, choose one.</i>	
Alternative 2A	No action This alternative would not require a person to obtain a Letter of Authorization or demonstrate knowledge of any approved gear-marking alternatives in order to use approved alternative gear markings.
Alternative 2B	Letter of Authorization and Demonstration of Knowledge Requirement This alternative would require a person to obtain a Letter of Authorization documenting that they have demonstrated knowledge of how to mark gear with an approved gear-marking alternative.
Alternative 2C	Letter of Authorization Only This alternative would require a person to obtain a Letter of Authorization to use a gear-marking alternative but would not require the demonstration of knowledge to obtain the Letter of Authorization.
Decisions/Questions/Information to Consider	
See resources above for feedback from Advisory Panels, the On-Demand Fishing Gear Conflict Working Group, and the public. These groups received presentations on the framework but did not identify a preferred alternative for Alternative Set 2.	
Other important Considerations/Draft EA References	
- Impacts on Fishery Resources: Section 6.2.2 - Impacts on Protected Species: Section 6.3.2 - Impacts on Physical Environment and Essential Fish Habitat: Section 6.4.2 - Impacts on Human Communities: 6.5.2	

Table 1. Summary of impacts of the alternatives.

Actions & Alternatives		Direct & Indirect Impacts			
		Fishery Resources (Target & Non-Target Species)	Protected Resources	Physical Environment (EFH)	Human Communities
Alternative Set 1: Authorization of approved gear-marking alternatives	1A: No Action	None	Moderate – to slight +	None	- to none
	1B: Region-wide alternative gear marking	None	Moderate – to moderate +	None	Slight – to +
	1C: Spatially and temporally limited alternative gear marking	None	Moderate – to moderate +	None	+
	1D: Spatially limited alternative gear marking	None	Moderate – to moderate +	None	Slight – to +
Alternative Set 2: Requirements to use approved gear-marking alternatives	2A: No Action	None	Slight indirect – to None	None	None
	2B: Letter of Authorization and demonstration of knowledge	None	None to slight indirect +	None	Slight – to none
	2C: Letter of Authorization Only	None	Slight indirect – to None	None	Slight – to none