

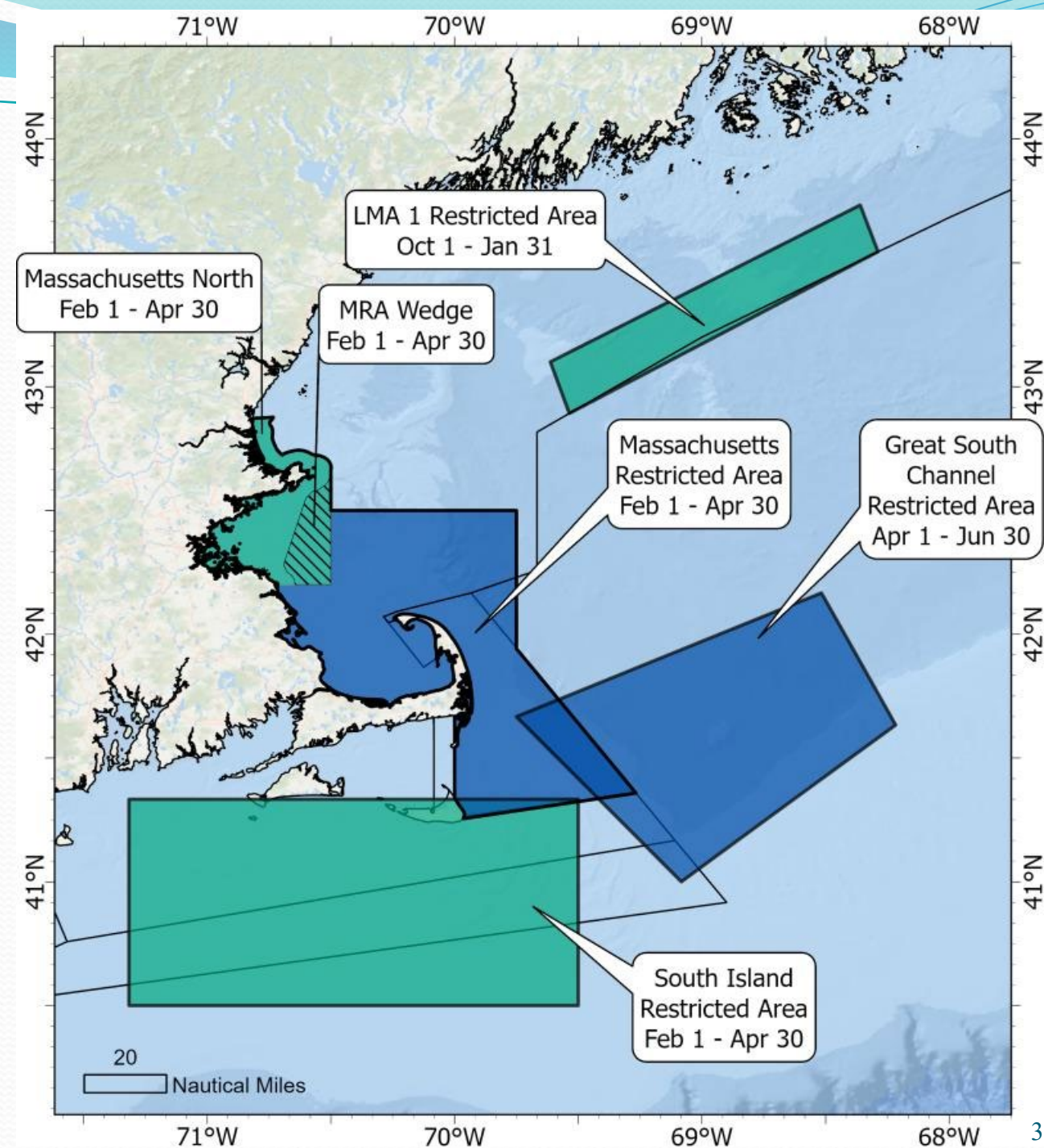
Joint Alternative Gear-Marking Framework

**Whiting Committee & Advisory Panel
November 6, 2025
Webinar**

Action Overview

- Joint action with the Mid-Atlantic Council; GARFO leading development
- Initiated by Councils in April 2025
- Considers allowing alternative gear marking as an option for fixed gear fisheries
 - Current gear marking regulations require physical markers (buoy, high flyers, radar reflectors, etc) → action would add alternative gear marking as another option in certain areas/times (i.e., Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan vertical line closure areas)
 - Would not require use of alternative gear marking or limit use of current gear marking methods
- Would apply to Council-managed fixed gear fisheries; NOAA Fisheries also considering applying rulemaking to federal lobster gear marking regulations

Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan Vertical Line Closures and Gear without Persistent Buoy Lines

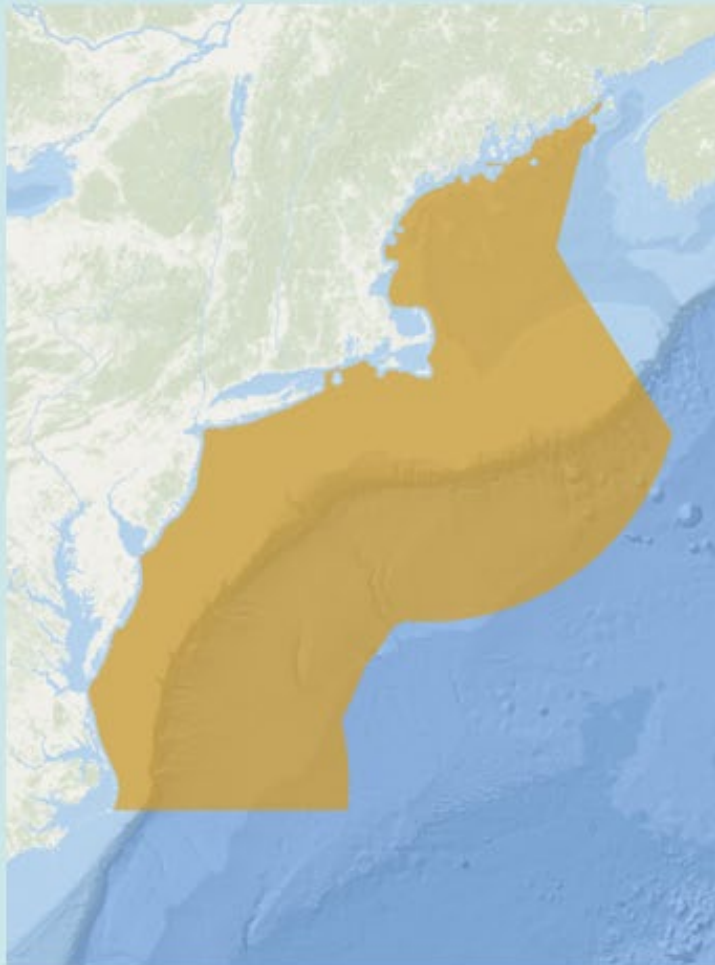


Map Source: [NOAA Fisheries](#)
Image Source: [NOAA Fisheries](#)

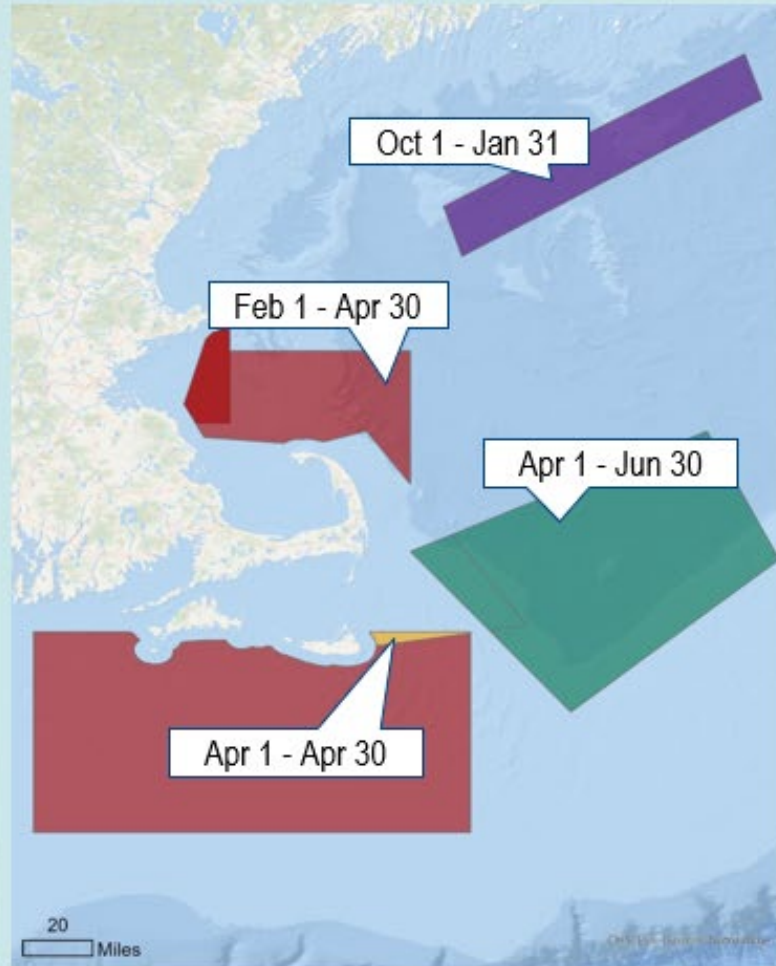
Alternative Set 1

- **Alternative 1A: No Action.** This alternative would not allow for alternative gear marking and would continue to require current surface markings (radar reflectors, highflyers, etc.).
- **Alternative 1B: Region-wide alternative gear marking.** would allow the use of alternative gear marking in all Federal waters within the Greater Atlantic Region (ME thru Cape Hatteras, NC).
- **Alternative 1C: Spatially and temporally limited alternative gear marking.** would allow alternative gear marking during and within persistent buoy line restricted areas established by the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWRTP) within the Greater Atlantic Region.
- **Alternative 1D: Spatially limited alternative gear marking.** would allow alternative gear marking within persistent buoy line restricted areas established by the ALWRTP within the Greater Atlantic Region during closures and in the same geographical areas when closures are not in place.

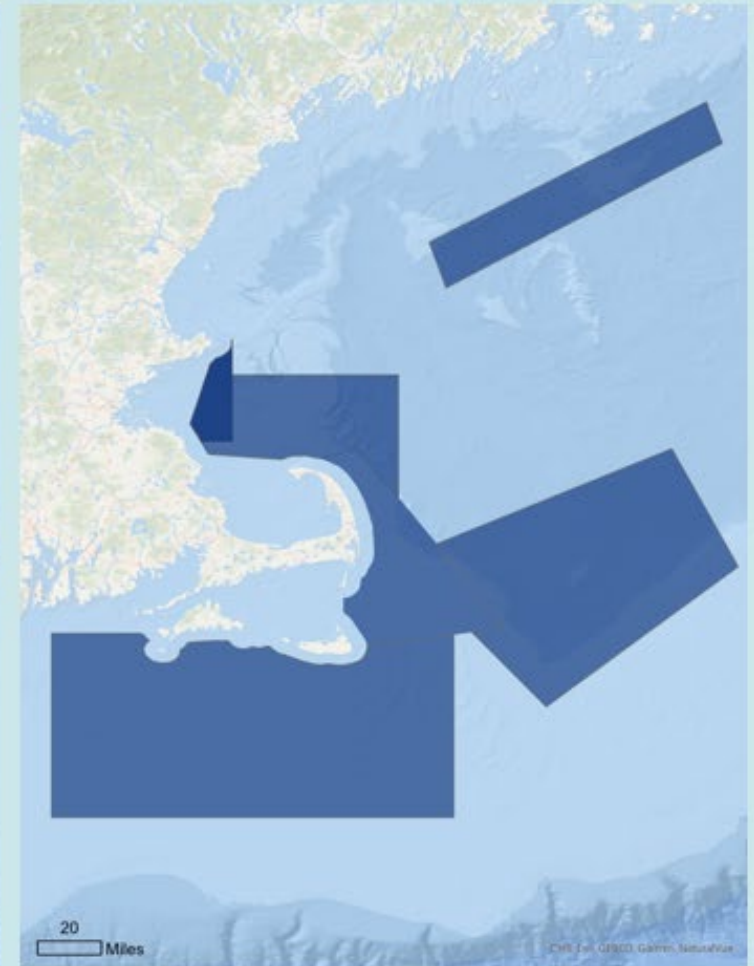
Alternative Set 1: Authorization of Approved Gear-Marking Alternatives



1B: Region-wide



1C: Spatially & temporally limited



1D: Spatially limited

Alternative Set 2

- **Alternative 2A: No Action.** This alternative would not require a person to demonstrate knowledge of how to mark gear with any approved gear-marking alternatives.
- **Alternative 2B: Letter of Authorization and Demonstration of Knowledge Requirement.** 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.** 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.

Gear Marking Approval Process & Functional Equivalence

- Gear marking alternatives would be approved by the Regional Administrator based on functional equivalence to current gear marking

Essential Elements of a Functional Equivalent	Beneficial Elements of a Functional Equivalent
Detectability: ocean users are able to locate gear	Viewing distance: gear can be detected from a similar minimum distance as current surface markings
Retrievability: gear must have an identified means of retrieval	Set direction: gear's set direction is identifiable
Identification: gear is marked with identifying information	Timing: gear location info is accessible by others at the time of deployment and while it persists in the water
Enforceability: enforcement can locate, retrieve, and redeploy gear	

Feedback on the Action

- Could open up fishing opportunities, allow for dynamic management
- Reduces entanglement risk for large whales
- Potential to reduce gear loss, reduce ghost gear, mitigate gear conflicts
- Support for educational requirement
- On-demand gear is not ready for use/implementation
- Cost concerns: ropeless gear, satellite connectivity, lost/ghost gear
- Gear conflicts, liability for damaged gear
- Implications for mobile fishery
- Safety
- Proposed approval process: lack of clarity, not public facing
- Lack of outreach to lobster fishery; need more engagement with industry

Status Update

NEFMC Motion – September 25, 2025

Moved that the Council **postpone final action** on the Alternative Gear Marking framework until additional information on ropeless gear and visualization technology, as solicited through a NMFS Request for Information, is available to inform stakeholder input and Council decision-making.

MAFMC passed same motion on October 8, 2025.

Next Steps → GARFO intends to develop Request for Information

Questions/ Discussion

- What are your thoughts on the action/ alternative sets? Do you have any concerns regarding this action?
- How widely have vessels in your area adopted internet capability (i.e., satellite internet)?
- Are there any aspects of functional equivalence that are not included here?
 - Based on your operations, is there a specific minimum or ideal viewing distance you would recommend for alternatively marked gear?
 - What other factors are important to consider?