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**FISHERIES**

# Joint Mid-Atlantic & New England Council Omnibus Alternative Gear-Marking Framework Adjustment

**July, 2025**

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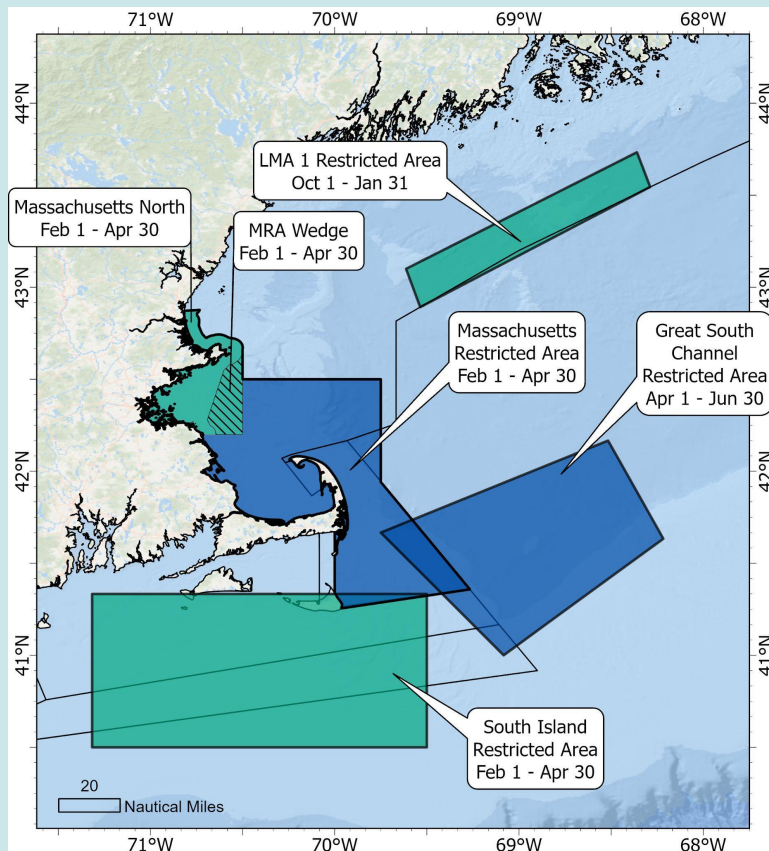


# Action Summary & Current Requirements

- Action considers allowing the use of fixed gear without persistent vertical lines
- Current gear-marking regulations require radar reflectors, pennants, highflyers, buoys, etc.
- Considered changes to gear-marking requirements would apply to all fixed-gear fisheries in the Greater Atlantic Region

# Take Reduction Plan (TRP): Seasonal Closures to Buoy Lines

## Current Northeast Lobster/Jonah crab Trap/Pot Restricted Areas

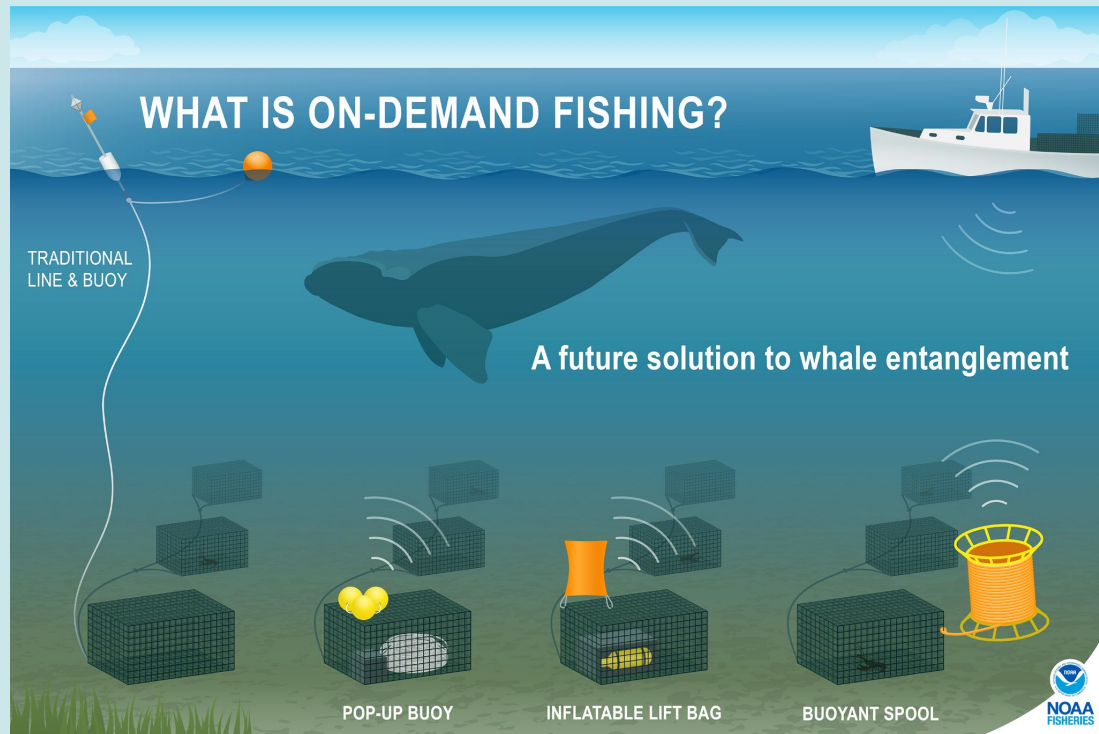


In 2021, TRP closures were expanded and modified from seasonal fishing closures to *persistent buoy line closures*

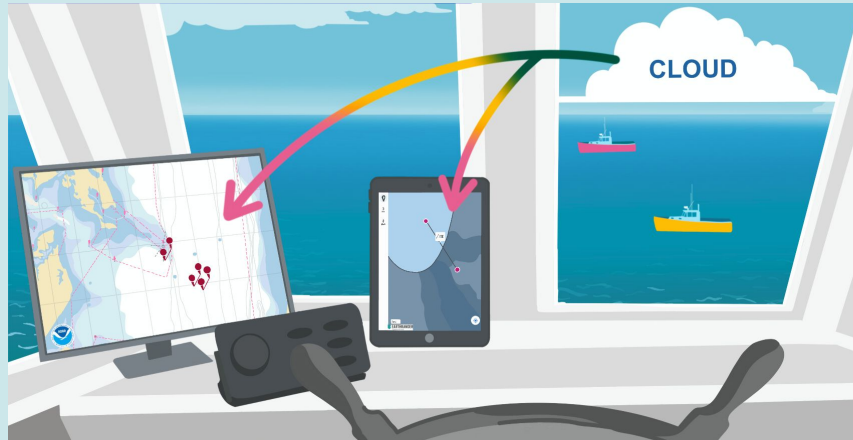
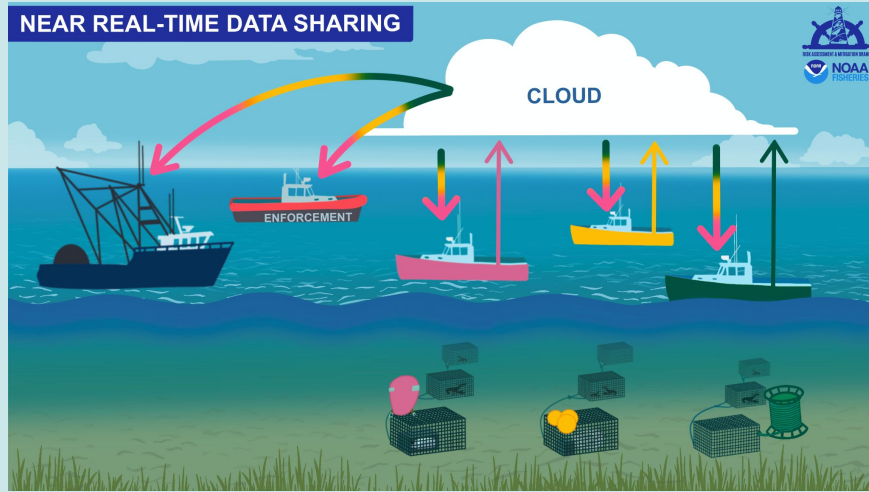
Federal fishery regulations in 50 CFR §648 and §697 require surface marking of fixed gear to enable other fishermen to see and avoid gear - preventing access to these areas

# Solution

- Revise regulations to allow for alternative (digital) gear marking
- Regulations would require current gear marking requirements OR a functionally equivalent alternative



# Potential Future



# Alternative Set 1: Authorization of Approved Gear-Marking Alternatives

**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.).

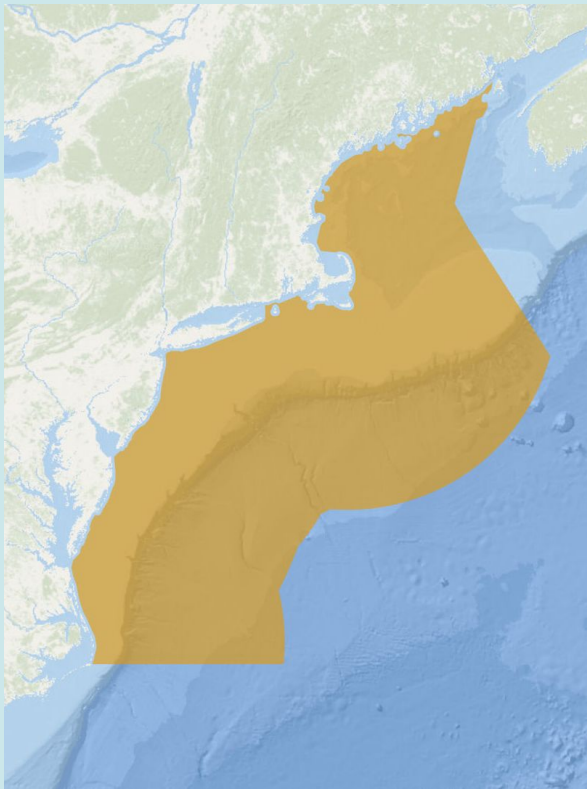
**Alternative 1B: Region-wide alternative gear marking.** would allow the use of alternative gear marking in all Federal waters within the Greater Atlantic Region.

**Alternative 1C: Spatially and temporally limited alternative gear marking.** would allow alternative gear marking during and within persistent buoy line seasonal restricted areas established by the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan.

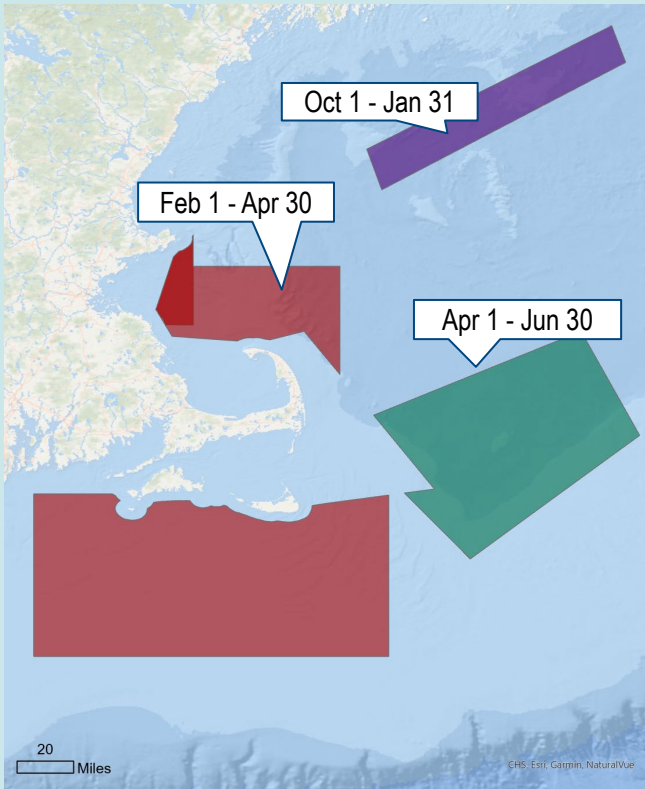
**Alternative 1D: Spatially limited alternative gear marking.** would allow alternative gear marking within persistent buoy line seasonal restricted areas established by the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan during seasonal closures and in the same geographical areas when closures are not in place.



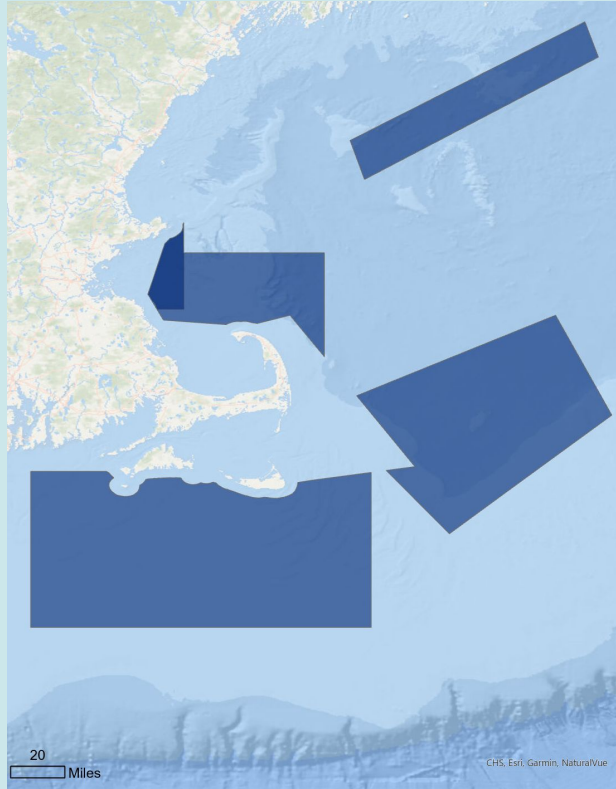
# Alternative Set 1: Authorization of Approved Gear-Marking Alternatives



**1B: Region-wide**



**1C: Spatially & temporally limited**



**1D: Spatially limited**

# Alternative Set 2: Requirements to Use Approved Gear-Marking Alternatives

**Alternative 2A: No Action.** This alternative would not require a person to demonstrate knowledge of any approved gear-marking alternatives.

**Alternative 2B: Educational Requirement.** This alternative would require a person to demonstrate knowledge of an approved gear-marking alternative.



# Functional Equivalence

Gear-marking alternatives would be approved based on functional equivalence to current gear marking

## Essential Elements of a Functional Equivalent

- **Detectability:** ocean users are able to locate gear
- **Retrievability:** gear must have an identified means of retrieval
- **Identification:** gear is marked with identifying information
- **Enforceability:** enforcement can locate, retrieve, and redeploy gear

## Beneficial Elements of a Functional Equivalent

- **Viewing distance:** gear can be detected from a similar minimum distance as current surface markings
- **Set direction:** gear's set direction is identifiable
- **Timing:** gear location info is accessible by others at the time of deployment and while it persists in the water

# Action Timeline

April 2025	NEFMC & MAFMC initiated action
May 2025	ASMFC received updates
June 2025	NEFMC & MAFMC received updates
August 2025	ASMFC receives updates
September 2025	NEFMC takes final action
October 2025	MAFMC takes final action; ASMFC receives updates on final action

Even after rulemaking, gear-marking alternatives would need to be approved before use

# Questions?



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