



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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May 7, 2024

Marine Fisheries Advisory

Fixed Gear Seasonal Closures and Small Vessel Speed Limit Lifted Effective Wednesday, May 8th (amended)

(This amended notice includes clarification on the rules concerning gillnetting, recreational lobster trap fishing, and the closure of a North Shore mobile gear area due to this immediate opening of the fixed gear fisheries.)

Effective Wednesday, May 8, 2024, all Fixed Gear Seasonal Closures—including the Commercial Trap Gear Closure, Commercial Gillnet Closure and Recreational Lobster and Crab Trap Closure—will be lifted to allow the setting and fishing of fixed gear. These closures have been in place throughout the winter and early spring to protect endangered North Atlantic right whales from entanglements. Additionally, DMF will lift the small vessel speed limit restriction in Cape Cod Bay allowing mariners operating vessels with an overall length less than 65' to operate at speeds greater than 10 knots.

The decision to lift these seasonal protections was based on recent aerial and acoustic surveys, which have not detected right whales in Massachusetts waters in recent days. Additionally, the copepod resource, which right whales feed on, has declined in state waters. Right whales have demonstrated a consistent annual pattern of departing from Massachusetts coastal waters in the first two weeks of May.

DMF appreciates the cooperation and patience of all the fishing industry participants and stakeholders. We are sensitive to the challenges these issues can have on fishers who are unable to make plans to begin their trap fishing season.

Mobile Gear Area 1A (Gloucester/Rockport) Closed: With the lifting of the seasonal fixed gear closures, Mobile Gear Area 1A will close on Wednesday, May 8, 2024 to mobile gear fishing until the next open period begins on June 15th.

Spring Trawl Survey: DMF's annual spring trawl survey that each spring and fall measures the abundance of fish and crustaceans throughout state waters began on Monday, May 6th. **All trap fishers are requested not to set traps in the planned tow locations.** The survey is currently working in Cape Cod Bay and then moving north through Massachusetts Bay and the North Shore as the week progresses. For more information, please review either the live map on our [website](#) or the tables and maps of station locations in the survey [announcement](#). The live map displays all remaining tow locations. The full screen map (click [see the map in full screen](#)) has a feature which allows you to display your current location. On the upper lefthand side of the map page click the "scope icon" button just below the home button. With the location feature toggled on, your device will display your live location on the map in relation to

planned survey stations. This feature can be used to assure gear is not in conflict with planned tows. Please do not set fixed fishing gear in survey stations until the trawl survey has passed. Future stock assessments depend on accurate data.

In the event of a delay due to weather, the schedule will be resumed as soon as working conditions permit. Fishers can contact the R/V Gloria Michelle on VHF channels 13 or 16 to determine the updated daily schedule. Cooperation from the fixed-gear fleet is greatly appreciated and is vital to the effective monitoring of marine resources in the Commonwealth. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Steve Wilcox, steve.wilcox@mass.gov, (508) 742-9731. For other questions, please contact DMF at marine.fish@mass.gov.