



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Division of Marine Fisheries

(617) 626-1520 | [www.mass.gov/marinefisheries](http://www.mass.gov/marinefisheries)



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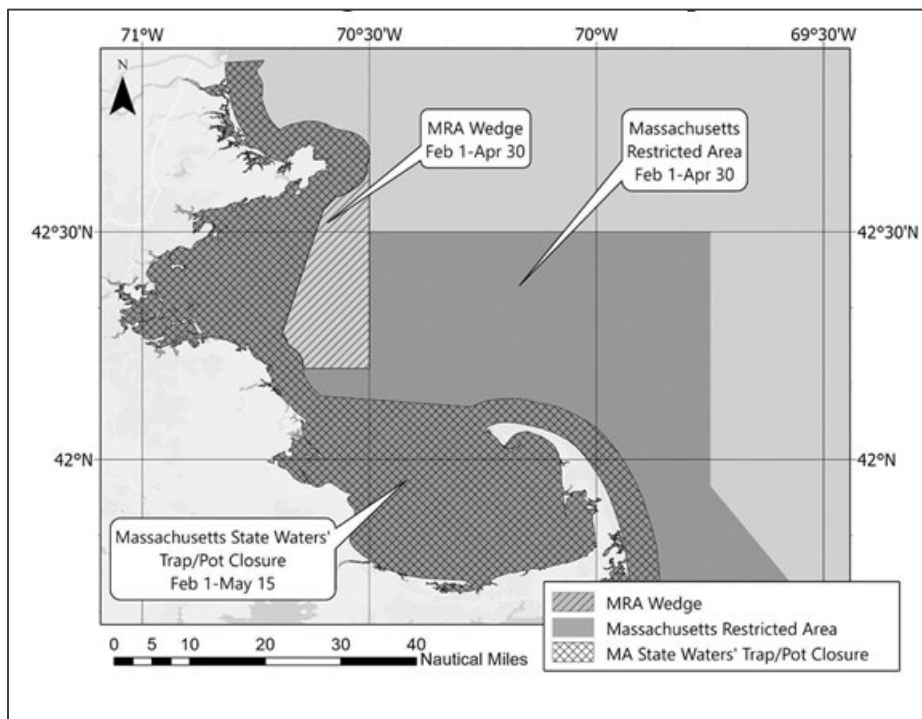
DANIEL J. MCKIERNAN  
Director

February 9, 2024

### Marine Fisheries Advisory

#### Wedge Closure Made Permanent Part of Massachusetts Restricted Area

The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) is notifying all commercial trap fishers that NOAA Fisheries has finalized a rule to make permanent the addition of the Massachusetts Restricted Area Wedge into the larger Massachusetts Restricted Area (MRA) annually from February 1 – April 30 (see [notice](#)). The purpose of this seasonal closure is to protect seasonal aggregations of right whales from potential entanglements in buoy lines. In 2024, the wedge restricted area will go into effect on **Friday, March 8, 2024**—to give fishermen adequate time for gear removal—and will remain in effect through April 30. In 2025 and beyond, the larger MRA—including the wedge area—will be in effect from February 1 – April 30, unless otherwise adjusted. If you have gear in the wedge this season, please develop a plan to remove the gear before the March 8, 2024 implementation date.



Reminder that the state waters portions of the MRA are closed from February 1 – May 15, but that closure may be rescinded after May 1 or extended past May 15 based on the observed presence or absence of right whales in state waters ([322 CMR 12.04](#)). Compliance with these closures is critically important to state and federal right whale conservation strategies. Permit holders who leave non-conforming trap gear in these closures may be subject to enforcement actions and administrative sanctions on their permits.

Lobster trap permit holders are also reminded that all buoy lines affixed to trap gear that are lawfully set in those state or federal waters open to trap gear and persistent buoy lines must comply with the applicable state and federal buoy marking requirements. See NOAA Fisheries' gear marking illustration for more information on marking [requirements](#). Please note that Massachusetts' regulations require all red state marks have a corresponding federal green mark when the gear is set in federal waters.

Fishers who currently have gear within this area are urged to remove it as soon as safely possible and before March 8, 2024. If you anticipate having gear left within the wedge once the area is closed, please contact NOAA Fisheries' Office of Law Enforcement (David Testeverde at [david.testeverde@NOAA.gov](mailto:david.testeverde@NOAA.gov) or 978-559-1083).

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