



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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Marine Fisheries Advisory

Reminder: Trap Gear Closures in Massachusetts State Waters and Adjacent Federal Waters

The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (*Marine Fisheries*) is reminding all commercial fishers of the various state and federal seasonal trap gear closures that go into effect on February 1 and impact Massachusetts' fishers (see [map](#)). The purpose of these closures is to protect seasonal aggregations of right whales from potential entanglements in buoy lines. 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. If you have non-conforming gear in these closures, please develop a plan to remove the gear as immediately as possible.

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.

Massachusetts Commercial Trap Gear Closure. Effective February 1, all waters under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth north and east of Cape Cod are closed to trap gear. This state closure does not extend into those southern state waters in Lobster Conservation Management Area 2. This state closure was extended northward in 2021 to include state waters north from Scituate to the New Hampshire maritime border. The closure remains in effect until May 15 but may be rescinded before or extend past that date based on the observed presence or absence of right whales in state waters.

DMF is partnering with the Massachusetts Environmental Police and a small group of commercial trap fishers to remove any lost or abandoned gear remaining in the closure area after February 1. To assist us in this, DMF is requesting fishers contact DMF if they observe any lost or abandoned gear and provide us with information regarding the location, i.e., latitudinal/longitudinal coordinates or the TD's (LORAN coordinates) of this gear. Please e-mail any such information to conservationsolutions@mass.gov.

Massachusetts Restricted Area. Annually, NOAA Fisheries closes the Massachusetts Restricted Area to lobster and jonah crab trap gear with persistent buoy lines from February 1 – April 30. The Massachusetts Restricted Area includes those federal waters on Stellwagen Bank and within the Outer Cape Cod Lobster Conservation Management area (as well as waters under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth subject to the superseding and more restrictive Massachusetts Commercial Trap Gear Closure).

Massachusetts Restricted Area Wedge. NOAA Fisheries just implemented an emergency closure of the Massachusetts Restricted Area Wedge (see [notice](#)). For 2023, the Massachusetts Restricted Wedge Area (“Wedge”) will be closed to trap gear with persistent buoy lines from February 1 – April 30. The wedge is located in federal waters in Massachusetts Bay west of Stellwagen Bank and east of state waters off Boston and is bounded by an imaginary straight line beginning at 42° 39.77’N latitude and 70° 30’ W longitude thence due south to 42° 12’ N latitude and 70° 30’ W longitude, thence due west to 42° 12’ N latitude and 70° 38.69 W longitude; thence northward along the state-federal waters boundary to the initial coordinate.

Fishers who currently have gear within this area are urged to remove it as soon as safely possible. If you anticipate having gear left within this Wedge after February 1, please contact NOAA Fisheries’ Office of Law Enforcement (David Testeverde at david.testeverde@NOAA.gov or 978-559-1083).

South Islands Restricted Area. Annually, NOAA Fisheries closes the South Islands Restricted Area to lobster and Jonah crab trap gear with persistent buoy lines from February 1 – April 30. The South Islands Restricted Area covers both state and federal waters bound by 41° 20’ N latitude to the north, 40° 30’ N latitude to the south, 71° 19’ W longitude to the west, and 69° 30’ W longitude to the east.

For more information regarding the management of protected marine species in Massachusetts, please visit our website (www.mass.gov/marinefisheries) or call DMF at 617-626-1520.