



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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February 20, 2025

Marine Fisheries Advisory

Clarification on Buoy Line Marking Rules for Massachusetts Trap Fishers

In recent years, rope manufacturers have developed weak rope with Tyvek tracers throughout. In Massachusetts commercial trap fisheries, the use of weak rope with the “MA LOBSTER” tracer is authorized to comply with both the state’s 1,700-pound buoy line breaking strength requirement and certain buoy line marking requirements. However, the extent to which the tracer rope complies with all the buoy line marking requirements depends on how it is constructed. The purpose of this advisory is to provide clear guidance on this subject. The following applies to all Massachusetts state waters trap fishing.

In consultation with NOAA Fisheries, DMF has determined that solid red colored weak rope with the “MA LOBSTER” visible throughout the buoy line is sufficient to meet all buoy line marking requirements. However, if you are using a weak rope with the “MA LOBSTER” tracer, that is not solid red colored (e.g., white, candy cane, grey), you are required to place a three-foot solid red mark (e.g., tape, paint, shrink tubing) in the top 12’ of the buoy line (“surface system”) to be in compliance with the solid surface marking requirement. Non-solid marking techniques (e.g., twine, cable ties, a tracer) are not sufficient to meet the solid surface system marking requirement but may be used to meet the marking requirements in the body of the buoy line. The purpose of the solid-colored surface system marking requirement is to make the source of the gear potentially identifiable from aerial platforms, whereas the non-solid marking requirement in the body of the buoy line can help identify the source of the gear when examined after disentanglement.

Please note that if you are a Massachusetts permit holder fishing with lobster and Jonah crab traps in federal waters within Lobster Conservation Management Areas 1, 2 and Outer Cape Cod, an additional one-foot solid green mark must within one-foot of the solid three-foot red mark.

For more information, please view NOAA Fisheries Northeast Lobster and Jonah Crab Trap/Pot Fisheries [Compliance Guide](#).