



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Division of Marine Fisheries

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### Marine Fisheries Advisory

#### Update on Recreational Lobster Rules for 2025

The purpose of this advisory is to notify you of the recreational lobster limits for the upcoming start of the 2025 season. Earlier this winter, DMF announced (see [Advisory](#)) changes to the minimum and maximum carapace size standards and escape vent rules for the Gulf of Maine and Outer Cape Cod Recreational Areas. These changes are not moving forward at this time and the recreational lobster fishing rules will remain status quo for 2025 (see Table).

DMF annually publishes a Recreational Saltwater Fishing Guide during the spring. This guide has an extensive section that covers the ins and outs of recreational lobster fishing in Massachusetts. While the 2025 version of this guide will not be published until May, the [2024 version](#) of this guide sufficiently describes the recreational lobster rules for the upcoming season (see pages 32 – 36). These rules are also summarized below.

Management Area Specific Size Limits and Escape Vent Rules			
Management Area	Minimum Carapace Size	Maximum Carapace Size	Escape Vent
Gulf of Maine	3 1/4"	5"	One rectangular vent 1 15/16 in × 5 3/4 in or two circular vents of 2 7/16 in in diameter
Outer Cape Cod	3 3/8"	N/A	One rectangular vent 2 in. × 5 3/4 in or two circular vents of 2 5/8 in in diameter
Southern New England	3 3/8"	5 1/4"	One rectangular vent 1 15/16 in × 5 3/4 in or two circular vents of 2 7/16 in in diameter

In addition to the area-specific rules in the table above, the following rules apply to recreational lobster fishing state-wide:

- **Trap Fishing Season.** Unless otherwise notified by DMF, the recreational trap fishery is closed from November 1 – May 15 annually.
- **Night Closure:** May not haul, set, raise, or tend traps or retain lobsters from 1/2 hour after sunset until 1/2 hour before sunrise.
- **Trap Limit.** No more than 10 lobster traps may be fished per household.
- **Bag Limit.** The retention and possession limit is 15 lobsters per day when fishing. However, lobsters may be stored and then retrieved in excess of this limit provided fishing is not actively occurring.
- **Female Egg Bearing Lobsters.** Egg bearing female lobsters must be immediately returned to the ocean. It is illegal to possess any female lobster that is egg bearing, from which eggs have been forcibly removed, or that has come into contact with any substance capable of removing eggs.
- **V-Notched Lobster.** It is illegal to possess any female lobster that bears a v-notch or indentation located at the base of the tail flipper immediately to the right of the center tail flipper as viewed from the rear of the lobster with the undersized facing down that is at least as deep as 1/8" with or without setal hairs.
- **Buoy Lines.** All traps must be rigged with a buoy line that does not exceed  $\frac{5}{16}$ " diameter and is to be marked with a 4" red mark midway up the line.
- **Buoy Colors and Marking.** All buoys are to be marked with the permit holders color combination designated on their permit and an alpha-numeric sequence that begins with the letter "N"; then is followed by the permit number; followed by a single dash ("-"); then a single digit number from 0-9 designating the sequential pot number in the series of trap traps that the permit holder may fish. Each letter and number must be 1" height by  $\frac{1}{2}$ " width. The buoy color scheme must also be visibly displayed on the vessel when trap fishing.
- **Buoy Configurations for Single Traps and Trawls.** Single traps are to be marked with a single buoy that is 7" x 7" or 5" x 11". The use of buoy sticks is optional, but if a stick is used a flag should not be attached. Multiple trap trawls are to be marked on the east end with a double buoy consisting of any combination of two 7" x 7" or 5" x 11" buoys and one or more 3-foot sticks (so the two buoys can be side-by-side or stacked). Then the west end of the trawl shall be marked with a single 7" x 7" or 5" x 11" buoy with a 3-foot stick and flag. Trawls of two or three traps shall only be marked on one end, whereas trawls of four or more traps must be marked on both.
- **Trap Marking.** All traps and lobster holding cars must be permanently marked with the same permit holder information and alpha-numeric sequence that appears on the buoy. This is generally accomplished by securing a synthetic plate to a wire trap or by burning or cutting the information into a wooden trap.