



Paul J. Diodati  
Director

Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Division of Marine Fisheries  
251 Causeway Street, Suite 400  
Boston, MA 02114  
(617) 626.1520  
Fax (617) 626.1509



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Marine Fisheries Advisory

### **EMERGENCY ACTION TO REDUCE GILLNET-CAUGHT LOBSTER HARVESTED IN OUTER CAPE COD**

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Effective Tuesday July 3rd, the Division of Marine Fisheries (*Marine Fisheries*) is limiting the landing and possession of lobsters caught by gillnets in the Outer Cape Cod Lobster Conservation Management Area (OCC LCMA) to an amount of lobsters that fit into two 3.9 cubic foot "lobster crates" not to exceed 100 lobsters. Crates must have affixed hard plastic covers that can be closed without doing damage to lobsters. This rule for gillnetters is being implemented to support the conservation objectives of the interstate lobster plan, and is expected to result in a drop in the total poundage of lobsters landed by gillnetters.

In addition to the catch limit, gillnet vessels will be subjected to other restrictions to enhance compliance: gillnetters will be required to separate their lobsters from other catch for inspection by Law Enforcement; store all lobsters in lobster crates while fishing; and will be prohibited from storing lobsters overboard in coastal waters.

While the spirit of the 100-lobster count allowance was to provide for a traditional level of by-catch, there has been a dramatic increase in lobster catch, especially by gillnetters using nets to take skates and monkfish in this area. Reported landings in the past five years have increased five-fold to over 100,000 lbs. in this area while catch by the primary gear sector, trap fishing, has not increased. This growth in gillnet-caught lobsters comes at a time that the trap-fishing sector has been subject to stringent controls on fishing effort. Since 2003 Outer Cape trap fishermen have been constrained by an innovative and aggressive effort control plan to reduce trap fishing in the area by up to 20% by 2008. This plan already has resulted in a 17% decrease in traps reported fished compared to the 1998 baseline.

Fishermen without a commercial lobster permit are reminded that it is unlawful to land or possess any lobsters. Offshore lobster permit holders fishing with mobile gear remain constrained solely by the 100 lobster per day limit, as do those fishing with gillnet gear outside of the OCC LCMA.

For further information contact DMF at 617 626-1520 or visit the *Marine Fisheries* webpage at:  
[www.mass.gov/marinefisheries](http://www.mass.gov/marinefisheries).