



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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Marine Fisheries Advisory

Clarification for Buoy Line Marking Rules for 2021

Effective May 1, 2021, DMF implemented a new requirement that all trap and pot fishermen configure their gear with buoy lines that break at 1,700 pounds of tension. In response, DMF has received a numerous questions regarding how fishermen are to comply this year with the existing trap and pot buoy line marking rules [322 CMR 4.13(2)(b)] given these new weak buoy line requirements.

Compliance with the new weak rope rules may be achieved in one of two ways. First, fishermen may use specially manufactured buoy lines with a custom 1,700 pound break strength. These manufactured fully formed weak ropes are the Rocky Mount Cordage Company's 3/8" diameter red weak rope and 3/8" diameter red and white weaved ("candy cane") weak rope. Second, fishermen may insert NOAA Fisheries approved weak contrivances into the top 75% of normal 3/8" buoy line every 60 feet. Approved weak contrivances include the "south shore sleeve" and several varieties of splices involving the fully formed weak rope. A full list of approved weak contrivances is located on [DMF's website](#).

With this in mind, DMF is providing all trap and pot fishermen with the following clarification on how its buoy line marking rules apply this season:

- Trawls in LMA1, LMA2 and OCCLCMA. Fishermen fishing trawls in LMA 1, LMA 2, and OCCLCMA are required to mark the top, middle, and bottom third of their buoy line with a red mark measuring at least 12". Those fishermen inserting weak rope splices or south shore sleeves (with red tracer) into their normal buoy lines may use the contrivance to comply with the red marking requirement. While unlikely, if fishermen are fishing trawls with fully formed red or candy cane weak rope, then they are to mark their buoy lines with 12" white marks.
- Single Traps in LMA 1. Fishermen fishing single traps in LMA 1 are required to mark the top, middle, and bottom third of their buoy line with a mark measuring at least 12" comprised of at least 6" of red and at least 6" of white. Those fishermen inserting weak rope splices or south shore sleeves (with red tracer) into their normal buoy lines may use the contrivance to comply with the red marking requirement. Fishermen fishing fully formed red or candy cane weak rope are to mark their buoy lines with 12" white marks.
- Single Traps in LMA 2. Fishermen fishing single traps in LMA 2 are required to mark the top, middle, and bottom third of their buoy line with a mark measuring at least 12" comprised of at least 6" of red and 6" of black. Those fishermen inserting weak rope splices or south shore sleeves (with a red tracer) into their line may use the contrivance to comply with the red marking requirement. Fishermen fishing fully formed red or candy cane weak rope are to substitute the 6" red mark for a 6" white mark.
- Single Traps in OCCLCMA. Fishermen fishing single traps in OCCLCMA are required to mark the top, middle, and bottom third of their buoy line with a mark measuring at least 12" comprised of at least 6" of red and 6" of yellow. Those fishermen inserting weak rope splices or south shore

sleeves (with a red tracer) into their line may use the contrivance to comply with the red marking requirement. Fishermen fishing fully formed red or candy cane weak rope are to substitute the 6” red mark for a 6” white mark.

These existing buoy line marking requirements are expected to remain in place only for this upcoming season. DMF is currently proposing changes to the buoy line marking rules for February 2022. While the proposal will require more frequent buoy line marking, it will take better advantage of the using weak contrivances to comply with buoy marking requirements. More information is available about these proposed regulations on [DMF’s website](#) and in the [public hearing notice](#). A public hearing is scheduled for May 11, 2021 at 6PM via Zoom. To attend this public hearing, you must pre-register [online](#). A video copy of the public hearing will be published to [DMF’s YouTube channel](#). Written public comment will be accepted through Thursday, May 20, 2021. All public comment should be addressed to Director McKiernan and may be sent via e-mail (marine.fish@mass.gov) or by post (251 Causeway Street, Suite 400, Boston, MA 02114).

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