



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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Marine Fisheries Advisory

Reminder: Lobster Bycatch Rules in Offshore Trawl Fisheries

Trawlers who hold an Offshore Lobster Permit may retain, possess, and land lobsters caught while fishing offshore in federal waters. However, state regulations at 322 CMR 7.01(2)(b) require these permit holders annually declare all the Lobster Conservation Management Areas (LCMAs) where the vessel named on the permit may fish during that calendar year. This is inclusive of all fishing activity, not just where lobsters may be retained. This is enforceable through VMS and the Massachusetts Environmental Police may seize your lobster catch should you fish in an LCMA that is not declared on your commercial fishing permit.

With many Offshore Lobster Permit holders currently renewing their permits for 2023, you are reminded to declare all the LCMAs where you may fish in this calendar year. Note, you need not declare the LCMAs that you transit through but do not fish in. While DMF may accommodate good cause in-season changes to your LCMA declarations, we strongly encourage you to make the appropriate LCMA declarations during the permit renewal process.

In instances when more than one LCMA is declared, then all lobsters retained must comply with the most restrictive regulations governing the LCMAs declared (Table 1). Additionally, please note, the regulation at 322 CMR 7.01(2)(b) applies this most restrictive rule requirement to the LMCAs declared, not the LCMA's that may be fished during any trip. This is required to conform state regulations to the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster (FMP). As the lobster fishery is principally prosecuted by trap gear, the FMP manages the lobster resource at the LCMA-level and establishes a discrete set of conservation standards for each LCMA. Allowing an offshore non-trap operation to retain non-conforming lobsters from a certain LCMA would undermine the efficacy of the conservation program.

Table 1. Lobster Conservation Regulations by LCMA for Federal Waters

LCMA	Minimum Size	Maximum Size	V-Notch Standard
LCMA 1	3 1/4"	5"	Any v-shaped notch of any size with or without setal hairs
LCMA 2	3 3/8"	5 1/4"	1/8" with or without setal hairs
LCMA 3	3 17/32"	6 3/4"	1/8" with or without setal hairs
OCC LCMA	3 3/8"	6 3/4"	1/8" with or without setal hairs

Offshore Lobster Permit holders fishing with mobile gear may not retain more than 100 lobsters per 24-hour day. Meaning for a trip lasting up to 24-hours, the trip limit is 100 lobsters; for a trip lasting more than 24-hours, but less than 48-hours, the trip limit is 200 lobsters; and so on, provided the vessel does

not exceed 500 lobsters per trip for any trip lasting 96-hours or longer. If a vessel cannot document the length of a trip in hours, the 100-lobster limit applies. The retention and landing of lobsters taken by mobile gear within the waters under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth is strictly prohibited.

For more information regarding the management of lobsters in Massachusetts, please visit our website: www.mass.gov/marinefisheries