



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Division of Marine Fisheries

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### Update on Approved Weak Contrivances and Weak Rope Distribution

#### Update on Approved Weak Contrivances

DMF has worked with commercial fishermen from along the coast to develop weak insert options to comply with the new regulations. A total of 8 different weak rope “contrivances” were produced with assistance from Massachusetts fishermen. Ten replicates of each of these contrivances were sent to Maine Department of Marine Resources to be tensile-strength tested on a rope breaking machine. The “contrivances” tested included; (1) a four tuck splice of red weak rope in 3/8” buoy line; (2) a three tuck splice of red weak rope into 3/8” buoy line; (3) an eye-to-loop splice of red weak rope into a 3/8” buoy line; (4) a butt splice of red weak rope into 3/8” buoy line; (5) a four tuck splice of candy cane weak rope into a 3/8” buoy line; (6) an eye-to-loop splice of candy cane weak rope into a 3/8” buoy line; (7) a butt splice of candy cane weak rope into 3/8” buoy line; and (8) the South Shore Sleeve with a heat shrink cover. Table 1 presents the mean and median breaking strength of the 10 replicates.

Table 1. Mean and median breaking strength (lbs) of 8 weak contrivances tested.

Option	Rope 1	Rope 2	Connection	Mean Strength	Median Strength
1	Weak Red	Hydropro	4 Tuck	1680	1699
2	Weak Red	Hydropro	3 Tuck	1597	1611
3	Weak Red	Hydropro	Eye splice/3 Tuck	1658	1668
4	Weak Red	Hydropro	Butt splice	1677	1710
5	Bonded Candycane	Everson	4 Tuck	1765	1764
6	Bonded Candycane	Everson	Eye splice/3 Tuck	1690	1700
7	Bonded Candycane	Everson	Butt splice	1829	1831
8	Annaco	Annaco	South Shore Sleeve	1657	1669

The test results were very encouraging with 7 out of the 8 options tested breaking at or below the 1,700 - pound tensile strength threshold. The data from these tests were sent to NOAA Fisheries for review and approval. NOAA Fisheries has indicated that seven out of the eight options are consistent with their criteria for developing for weak contrivances. Accordingly, DMF is approving Options 1 – 6 and 8 for use. Photos of these approved contrivances may be found on DMF’s [website](#). One option—Option 7—is not approved at this time and needs additional development and testing. This option uses 3/8” candy cane rope attached with a butt splice and tested on the high end of the upper tolerance of what is acceptable.

To comply with the new weak rope rules, a fisherman must use a least a 3’ piece of one of the approved materials (red weak rope, candy cane weak rope, or a Novabraid sleeve) and attach it to their standard buoy rope using one of the approved connections methods. Fishermen may also comply with the new weak rope regulations by using buoy lines made of fully formed weak rope. For those fishermen

complying with these requirements through the use of weak contrivances, there must be at least one contrivance in the top 75% of the buoy line and no more than 60' of buoy line between contrivances. For example, in a buoy line of less than 60' there needs to be one contrivance anywhere in the top 75% of the line, whereas in a 120' buoy line—where the bottom 30' consists of floating rope and the upper 90' (75%) consists of sink rope—the upper 90' must have one weak contrivance inserted at a location so that no length of buoy line greater than 60' is without a contrivance exists.

### **Update on Distribution of Weak Rope and Contrivances**

Throughout March, DMF will schedule and hold additional distribution events at a variety of locations across the state. We have received several emails this week from fishermen interested in receiving their samples at upcoming events. If you have emailed us this week, you will be contacted early next week with more information. If you have not emailed us yet to say you are interested in obtaining samples, please email us at [conservationsolutions@mass.gov](mailto:conservationsolutions@mass.gov). To ensure that adequate supplies of gear are brought to each event, we ask interested fishermen to contact DMF at the above e-mail address so that we can provide you with detailed information about the nearest event and track the number of fishermen scheduled to attend. At present, DMF can provide every commercial trap/pot permit holder with 2 coils of weak rope and up to 20 of the Novabraid sleeves. Please contact us at least 24 hours in advance of any scheduled distribution event to allow us to secure the materials for you in advance.

### **Q&A Session Reminder**

On Tuesday March 23<sup>rd</sup> at 5 PM, DMF will host a Zoom webinar for all commercial lobster trap, fish pot, and whelk pot fishermen. This webinar will provide updates and clarification from DMF staff regarding how to comply with the new gear modification regulations, specifically the use of 1,700-pound “weak rope” and the installation of contrivances in the buoy line to meet the 1,700-pound breaking strength standard. The webinar will feature a question and answer session that will provide permit holders with an opportunity to ask clarifying questions. In order to attend the webinar, participants are required to register in advance. To register for this webinar, click [here](#). Once you register, you will receive a confirmation e-mail containing your login information for the webinar.

### **General Information**

All current information regarding these gear modifications, approved weak contrivances, FAQs, and gear distribution events will be posted on DMF's [Trap Gear Modification webpage](#). If you have any questions, please e-mail us at [conservationsolutions@mass.gov](mailto:conservationsolutions@mass.gov).