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FISHERIES

Southeast Regional
Office
Protected
Resources Division

Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan

South Atlantic Fisheries Management Council
Protected Resources Committee

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Topics

- Marine Mammal Protection Act
- Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan and Team
- 2014 ALWTRP Amendment
 - Why Amendment was necessary
 - How Amendment was developed
 - Amendment Requirements



The Marine Mammal Protection Act

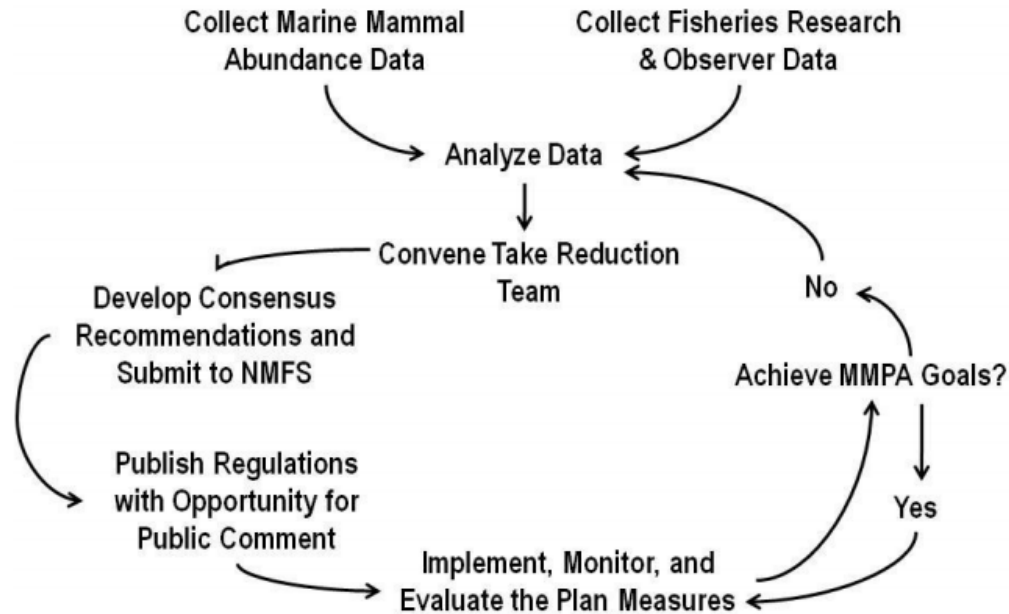
- **Primary objective:** Maintain OSP¹ or immediately obtain OSP
- **OSP:** number of animals that results in max productivity
- **Mandate:** reduce bycatch SI and mortality to <PBR and eventually insignificant levels (10% of PBR)
- **PBR:** maximum number of animals, not including natural mortalities, that may be removed from a marine mammal stock while allowing that stock to reach or maintain its OSP
- **NARW PBR:** .9 per year (insignificant level is 10% of PBR)
- **NARW SI&M** from fisheries bycatch continues to exceed PBR
- **TRT** recommends to NMFS measures to reduce bycatch
- **NARWs are managed under a TRP** (ALWTRP) because they are endangered, above PBR, and interacting with Category I and II fisheries

¹Optimum Sustainable Population

Take Reduction Plans

- Goal of TRPs (per MMPA):
 - Reduce SI&M to below PBR w/in 6 months
 - Reduce SI&M to insignificant levels within 5 years

- Process:



- 1997: ALWTRP takes effect
- 1999, 2000, 2001: Minor changes and updated gear modifications and effective dates
- 2002: Three Rules Published
 - 1. Further modifications to commercial fishing gear
 - 2. Dynamic Area Management (DAM)
 - 3. Seasonal Area Management
- 2003: DAM Gear Modifications
- 2006: SE right whale (RW) emergency rule
- 2007: Expand the SE US Restricted Area and prohibit gillnet fishing or possession during RW season
- 2009: Sinking groundline rule (plus other requirements)
- 2014: Closures, gear modifications/regulations, more gear marking

Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan

- Despite several amendments, the ALWTRP has not yet achieved PBR or insignificant levels of take for right whales.
- 2007-2011: min SI&M to NARWs from fisheries interactions was 3.25/year (MMPA goal: 0.9/year)

Development of 2014 Amendment (Vertical Line Rule)

In 2003, the Team agreed to tackle:

- Groundlines
- Vertical lines (endlines or buoy lines)

First, ALWTRT addressed groundlines

- ALWTRP amended in 2009 –required sinking groundline throughout most of the east coast.

Then, ALWTRT addressed vertical lines

- ALWTRP amended in 2014 –focused on reducing number of vertical lines and entanglement severity.

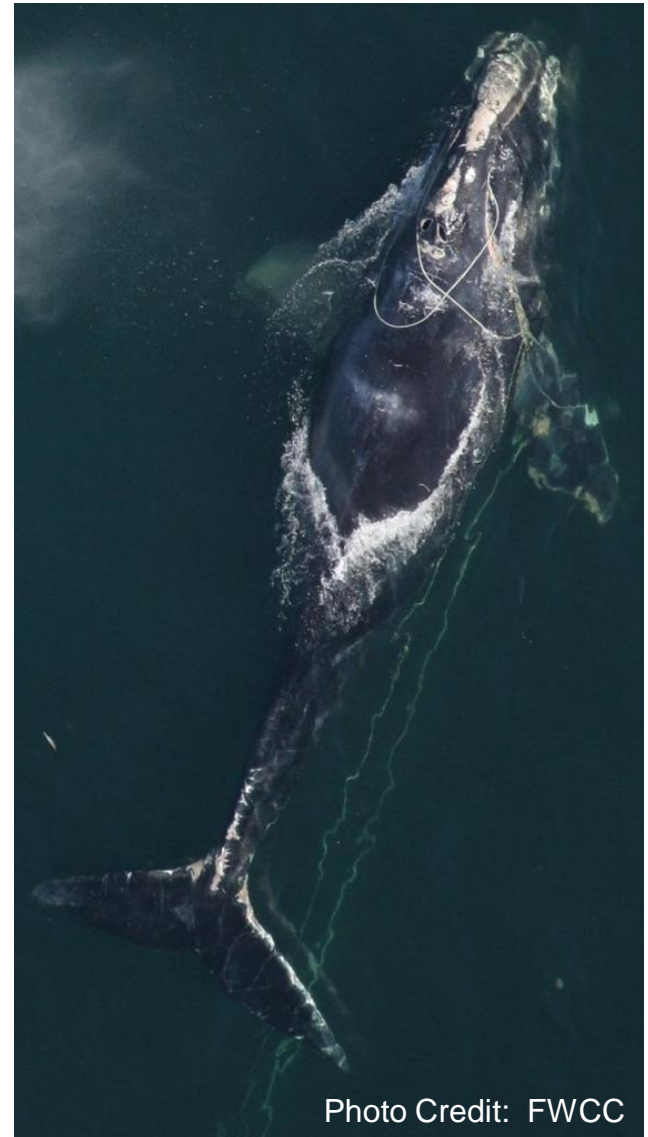


Photo Credit: FWCC



Development of 2014 Amendment (Vertical Line Rule)

Objective:

- Reduce SI&M to below PBR w/in 6 mos
- Reduce SI&M to insignificant levels within 5 years

Goal:

- Develop measures to reduce the risk (number and severity) of vertical line entanglements

Analytical Approach:

- Identified areas where vertical lines overlapped with whale sightings*
- This approach allowed us to focus on high priority areas and customize measures (gear density, whale density, co-occurrence, whale life history).

*Also considered young calves, reproducing females, and live bottom habitat in Southeast U.S.

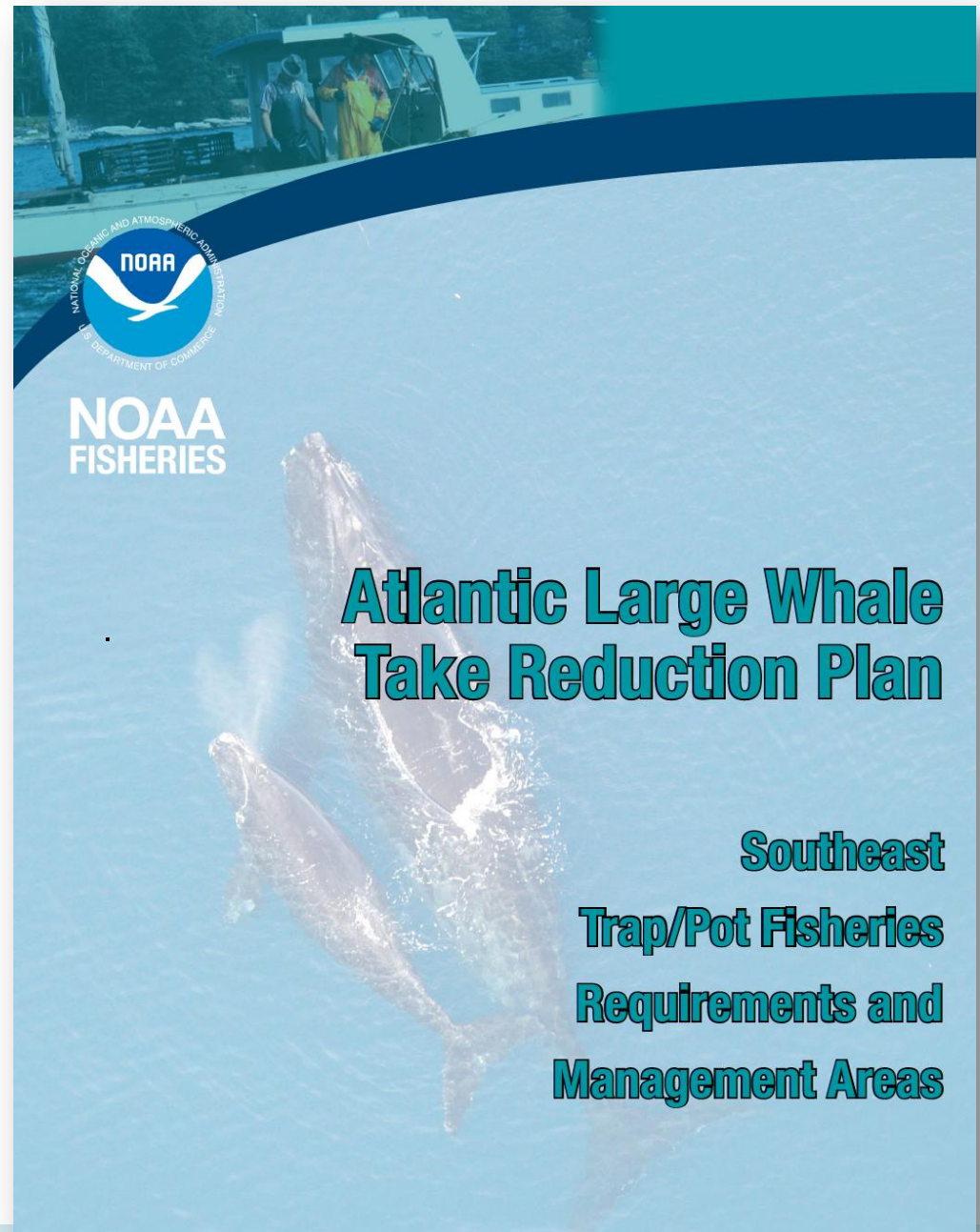
Important Note:

South Atlantic Black Sea Bass Pot Fishery

Annual BSB winter closures (Quota and Regulatory)

- Resulted in little/no overlap between whales and BSB pot gear
- Due to little/no signature in model, BSB fishery was “off the radar screen” of the ALWTRT and NMFS

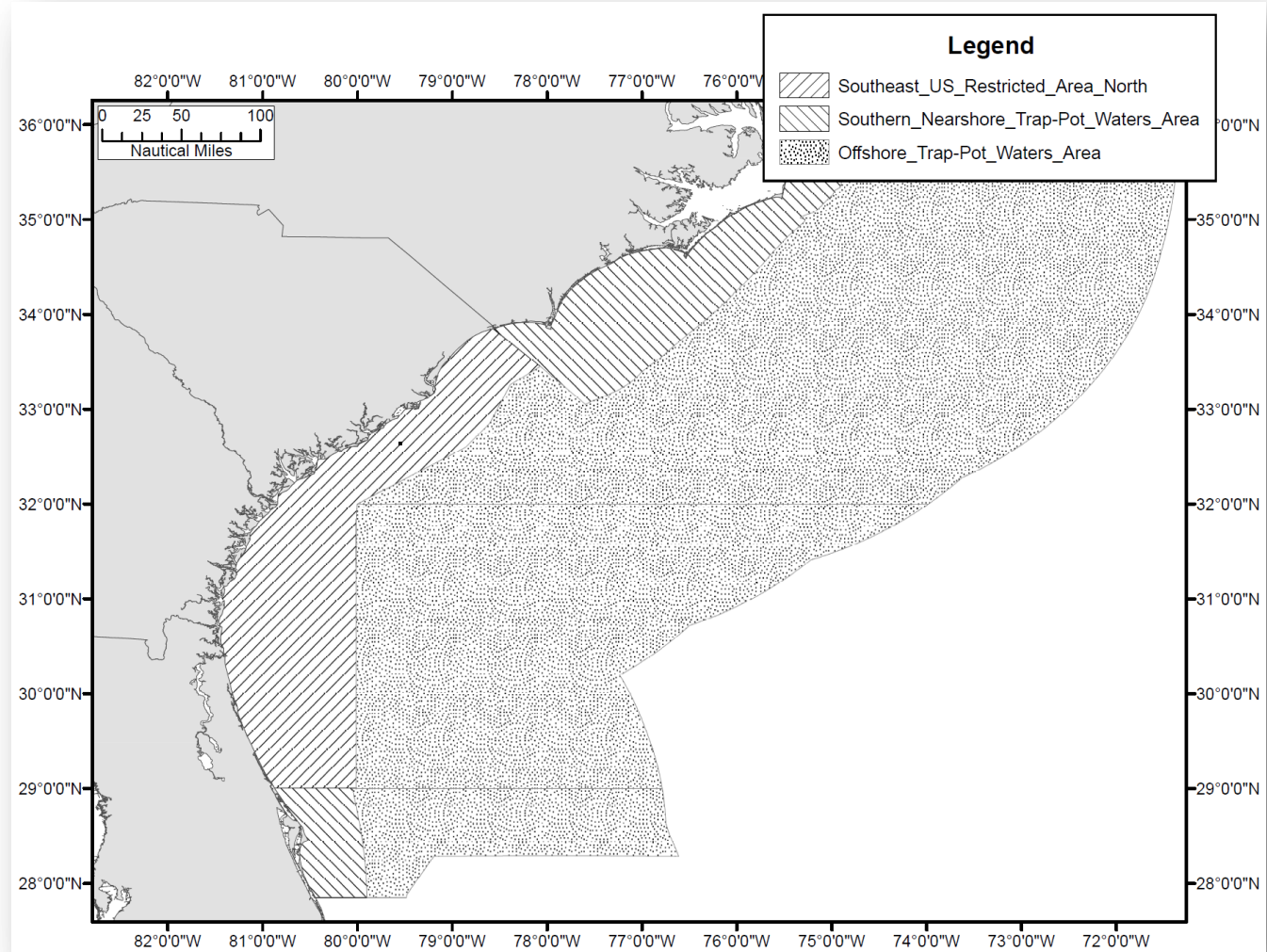
ALWTRP: 2014 Amendment



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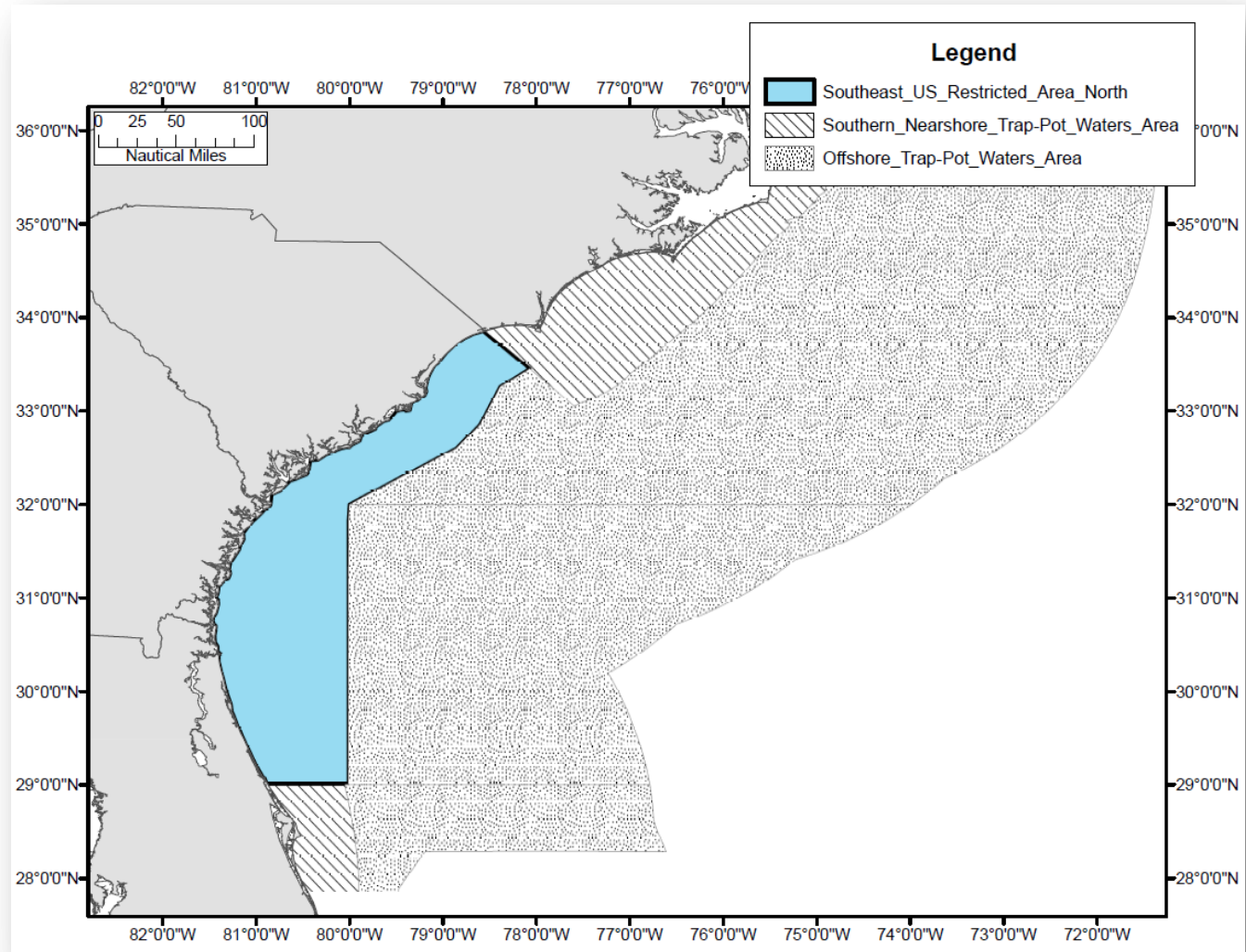
2014 ALWTRP Amendment

- Requirements vary by geographic area
- Increases Size and Frequency of Gear Marking



2014 ALWTRP Amendment

- Establishes Southeast Restricted Area North



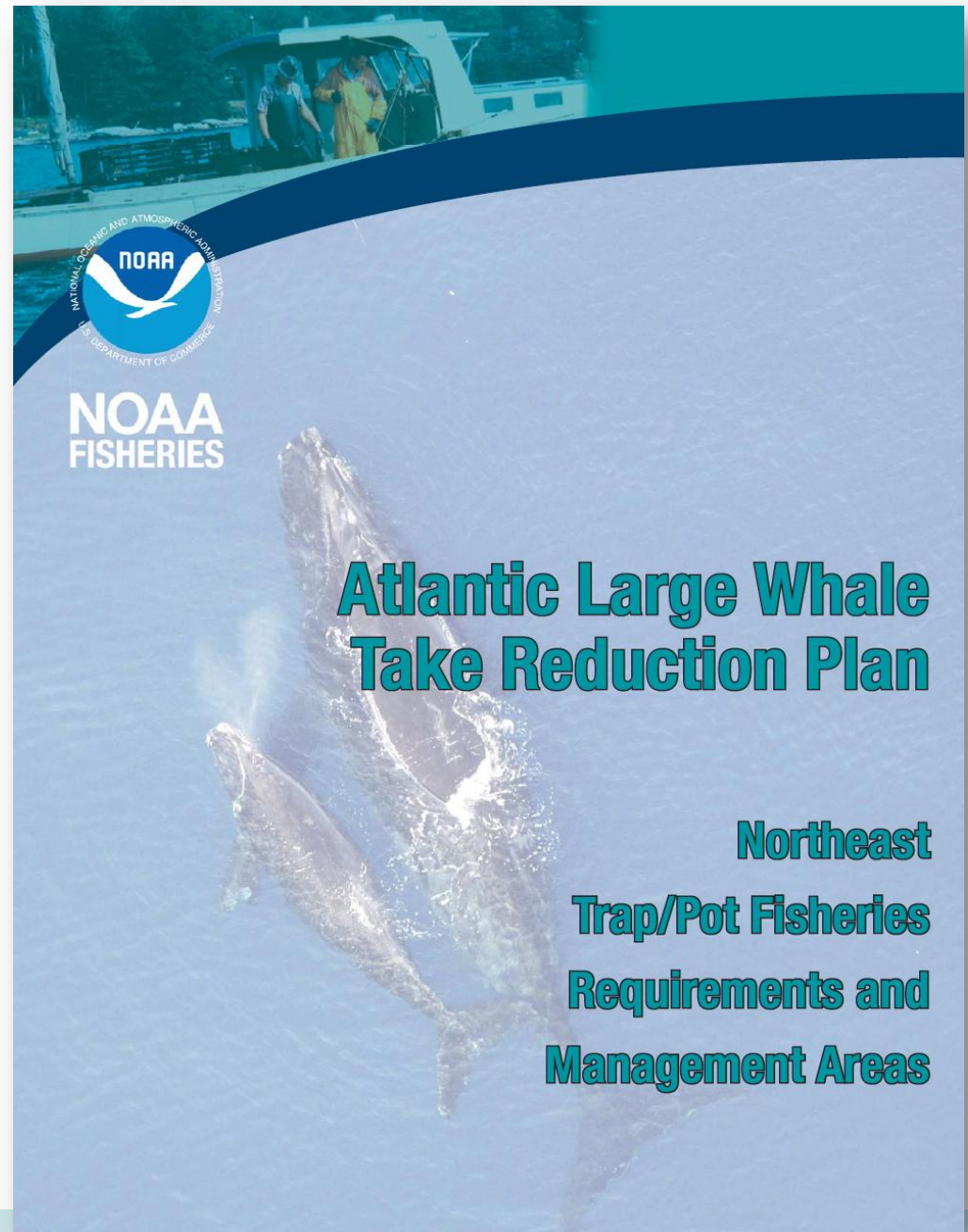
2014 ALWTRP Amendment

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DATES	AREA	REQUIREMENTS
Nov 15- Apr 15	Throughout SERA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased Size and Frequency of Gear Marking Maximum 1 trap per vertical line
	FL State Waters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak links \leq 200 lbs Vertical line breaking strength \leq 1,500 lbs
	SC/GA State Waters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak links \leq 600 lbs Vertical line breaking strength \leq 2,200 lbs
	Federal Waters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak links \leq 600 lbs Vertical line breaking strength \leq 2,200 lbs Trap/pot gear must be brought back to shore at the conclusion of each trip



ALWTRP: 2014 Amendment



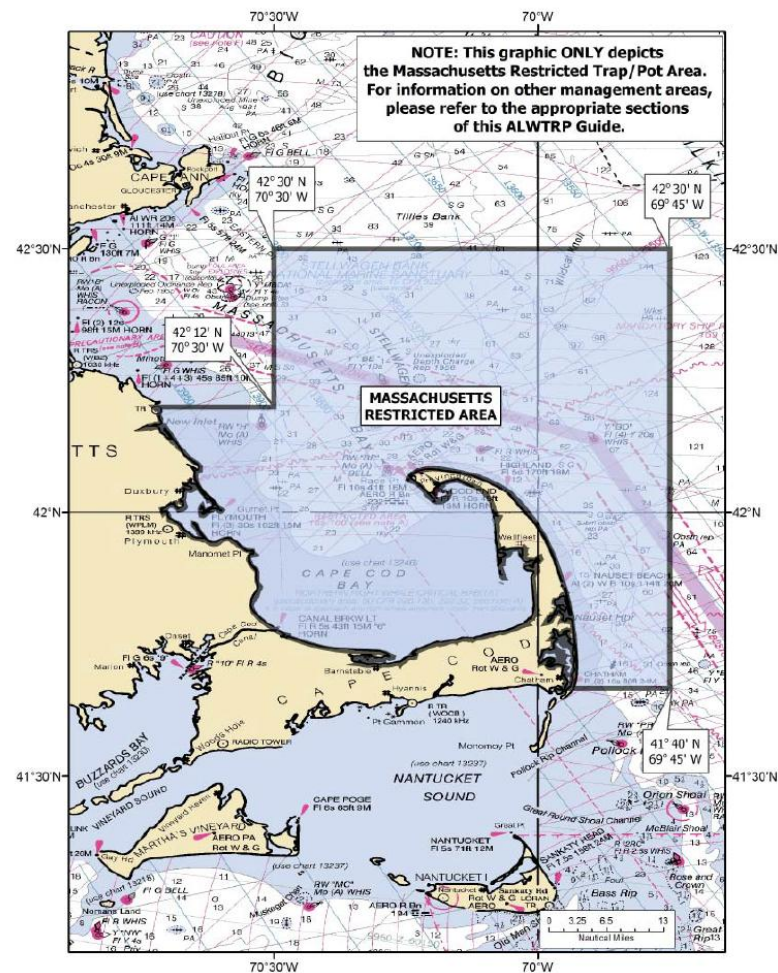
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2014 ALWTRP Amendment: Northeast

- Specifies minimum number of traps per trawls
- Increases Size and Frequency of Gear Marking
- Jan 1-Apr 30 Mass. Restricted Area **Closed***
- Lobster fishery was most economically affected (\$1.5m to \$3.6m)

*Changes proposed

Northeast Trap/Pot Management Areas Massachusetts Restricted Area



Considering ALWTRP Exemptions/Modifications

- 6 proposals recently submitted for ALWTRT consideration:
 - 5 proposals will be discussed at January meeting
 - 1 proposal considered by the team and is in the proposed rule stage.
- Proposals for consideration must address conservation equivalency relative to status quo

Conclusions

- Marine Mammal Protection Act has set a high bar
- The ALWTRP goal is to achieve MMPA mandate
- NARW incidental bycatch in commercial fisheries exceeds levels established by MMPA
- ALWTRP
 - requirements vary by time and space
 - Monitor results of 2014 ALWTRP amendments
 - ALWTRP Website:
<http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/Protected/whaletrp/>

A Note About List of Fisheries and Atlantic Mixed Species Trap/Pot Fishery

- Includes U.S. Mid-Atlantic and Southeast U.S. Atlantic Black Seabass Trap/Pot
- Category II
- Based on analogy with lobster trap/pot fishery (i.e. gear is similar: trap on substrate, buoy on surface, line between the two)

