

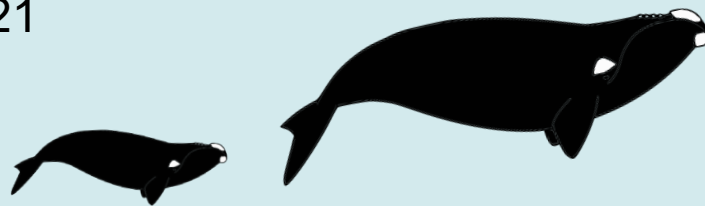
Scoping for Modifications to the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan: Phase 2

Mid-Atlantic Trap/Pot Fisheries

Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and Northern North Carolina

September 9, 2021

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NOAA
FISHERIES

What to Expect

Scope:

- New entanglement risk reduction measures coastwide (gillnet and trap/pot fisheries)

Agenda:

- 6:30 - 7:15 pm: Presentation
- 7:15 - 7:30 pm: Questions
- 7:30 - 8:30 pm: Public input

Ground Rules for Speaking:

- Be respectful and direct comments at the presenters.
- When you are called on, we will un-mute you, and then you will need to un-mute yourself.
- Today's event is being recorded (including anything typed into the questions box) and will be available through the event registration page after the meeting.

How to Participate Tonight:

- You may get in line at any time.
- If you have a question, type QUESTION in the questions box. Please include the slide number or topic of your question.
- If you'd like to give public comment, type COMMENT in the 'questions box'.
- You may change your mind at any time. Say or type pass when your name is called.

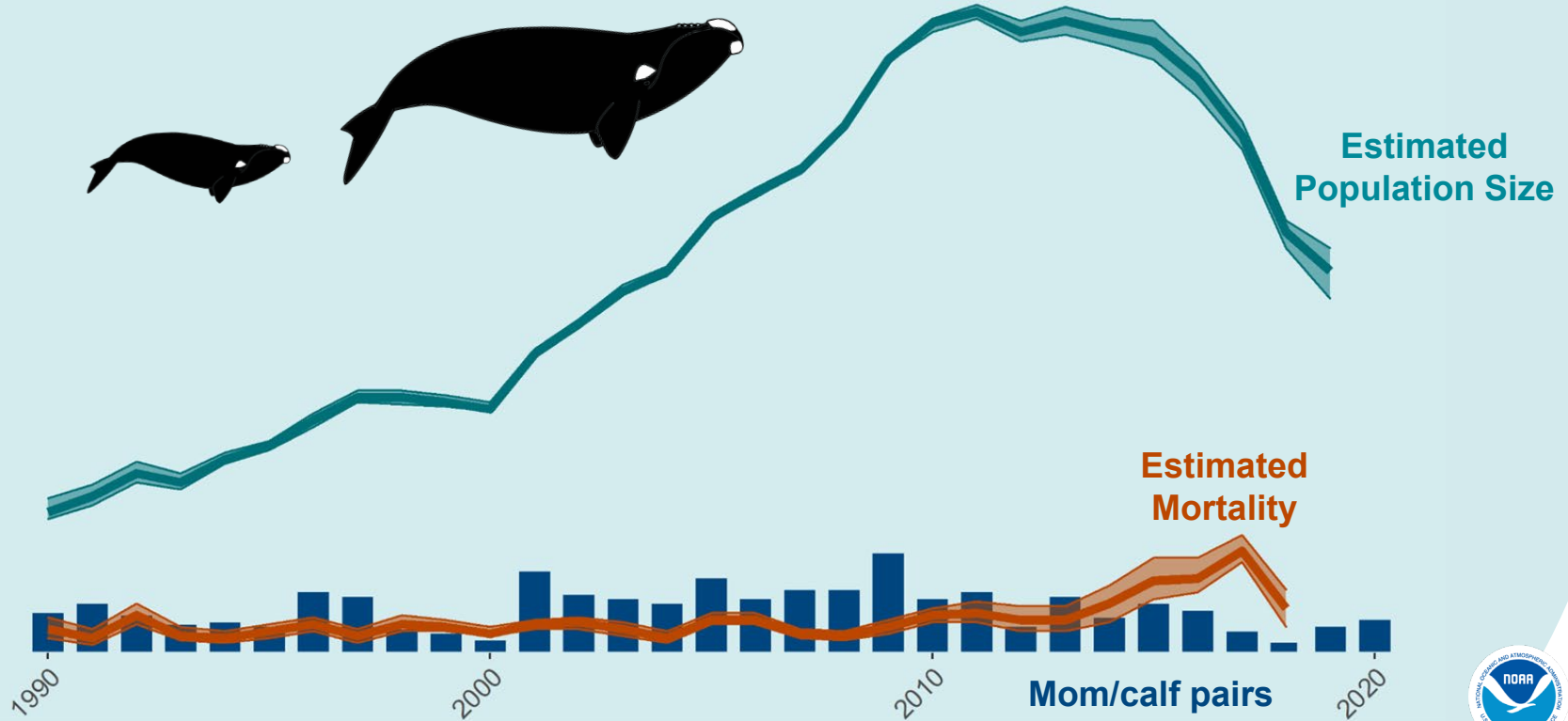


Background

ALWTRP & Right Whale Population Decline

North Atlantic Right Whale Population in Decline Since 2010

Data from: Pace 2021, New England Aquarium, Florida Fish & Wildlife



Unusual Mortality Event: 2017 - present

~368

TOTAL WHALES IN 2019

<100

POTENTIAL MOTHERS

52

KNOWN MORTALITIES AND SERIOUS INJURIES

40

MOM/CALF PAIRS SINCE WINTER OF 2016/2017

5

SERIOUS INJURIES AVOIDED VIA
DISENTANGLEMENT

MORTALITIES

34 Known mortalities (9 US, 24 CN)

9 entanglements (4 US, 5 CN)

11 vessel strikes (3 US, 8 CN)

13 cause undetermined (2 US, 11 CN)

1 perinatal mortality

SERIOUS INJURIES

18 Known Seriously Injured (11 US, 4 CN)

14 entanglements (9 US, 5 CN)

2 vessel strikes (2 US)

2 cause undetermined (2 US)

Country apportioned according to the confirmed country or country where the incident was first sighted.

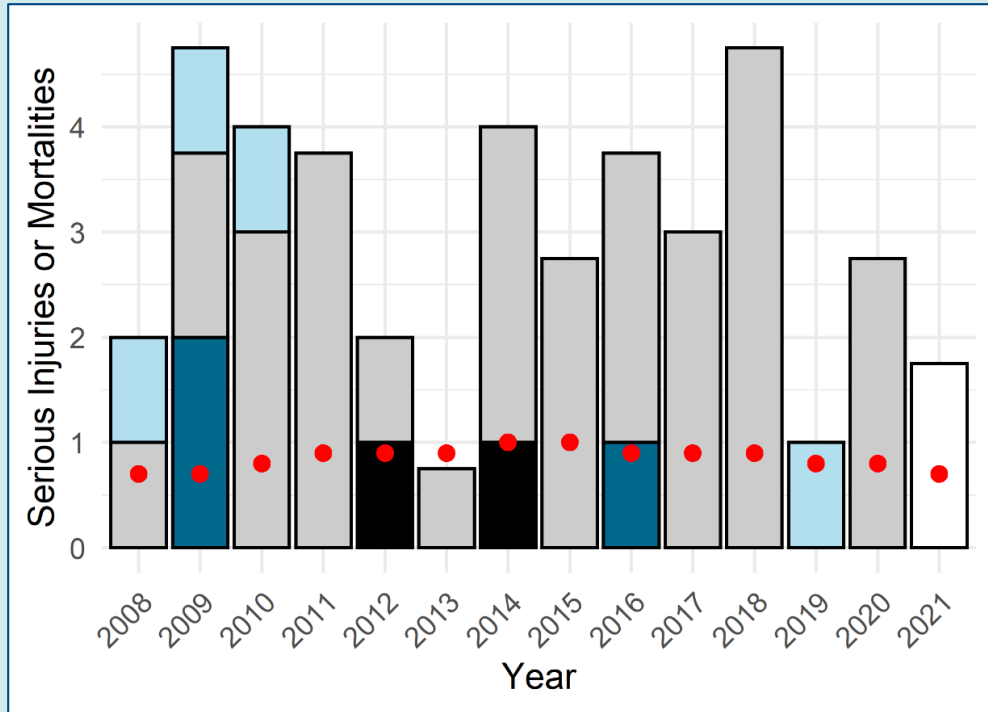
Note: the data here include 2 undetermined cases not included in the Unusual Mortality Event



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Right whale mortality and serious injury in U.S. exceeds PBR

Documented Mortality and Serious Injury* of NARWs
*Known US entanglements and those first seen in US***



Data from: Henry et al 2020, Henry et al 2015, Henry et al 2010, NMFS
 * Data from 2020 and 2021 are preliminary
 ** Graph does not include known Canadian entanglements or those first seen in Canada
 * Five year rolling average PBR



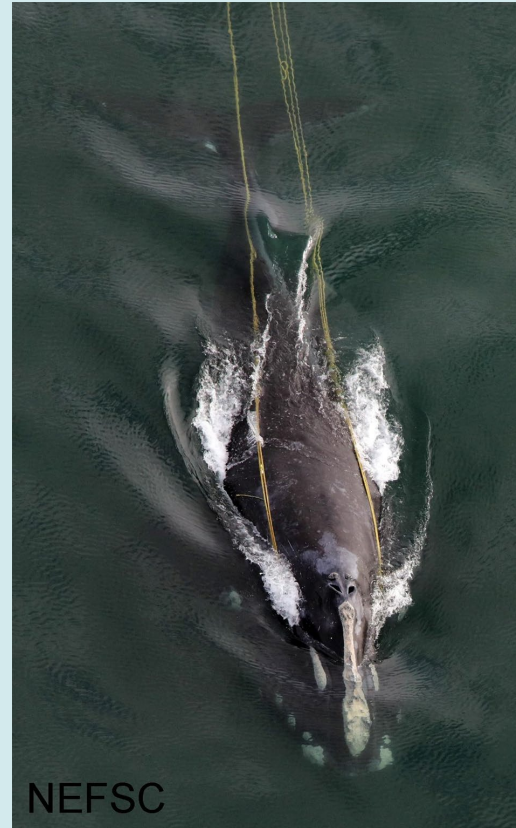
Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan

Required by MMPA if incidental mortality and serious injury in U.S. commercial fisheries exceeds Potential Biological Removal (PBR)

- Develop and recommend measures to reduce mortality and serious injury
- Consensus-based
- NMFS ultimately responsible for taking action

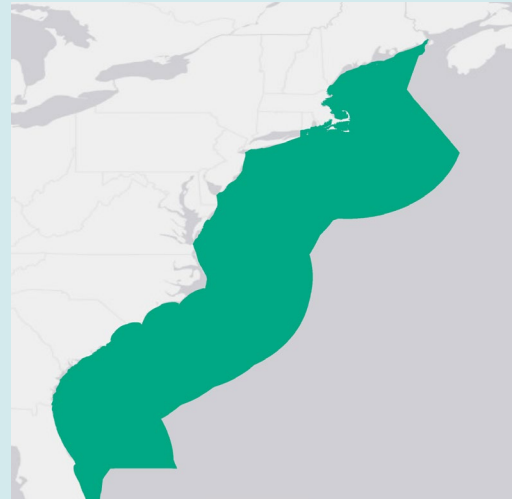
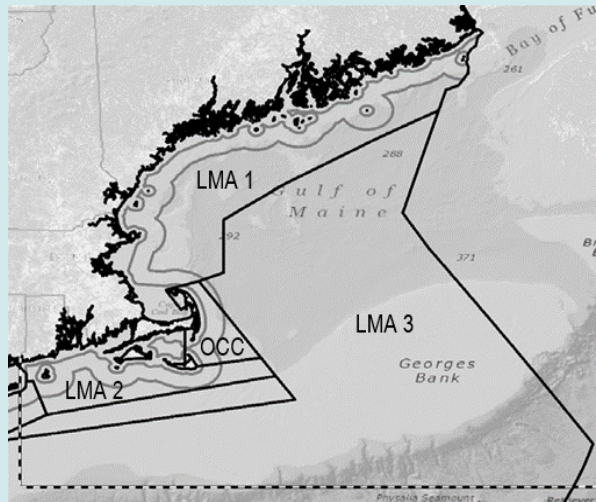
Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team

- 60 member team including 23 fishermen
- Right, humpback, and fin whales



Phase 2

Scoping for possible measures for NMFS to consider that will further reduce entanglement risk from U.S. commercial fisheries



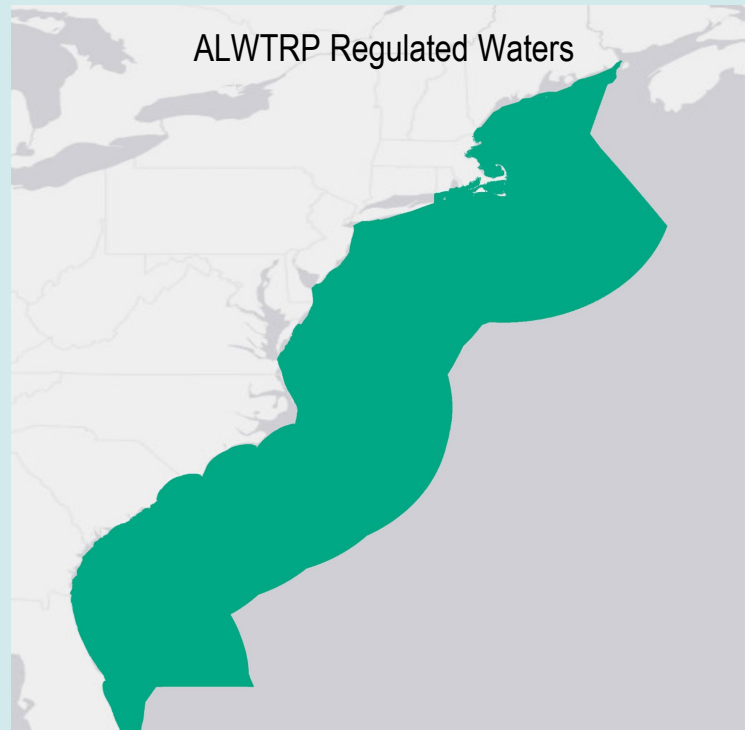
Phase 2: Overview

Need to reduce remaining risk coastwide

- Moving towards a risk reduction target that accounts for estimated mortality ~ 80%
- Currently re-assessing the target with new information and new PBR (0.7)

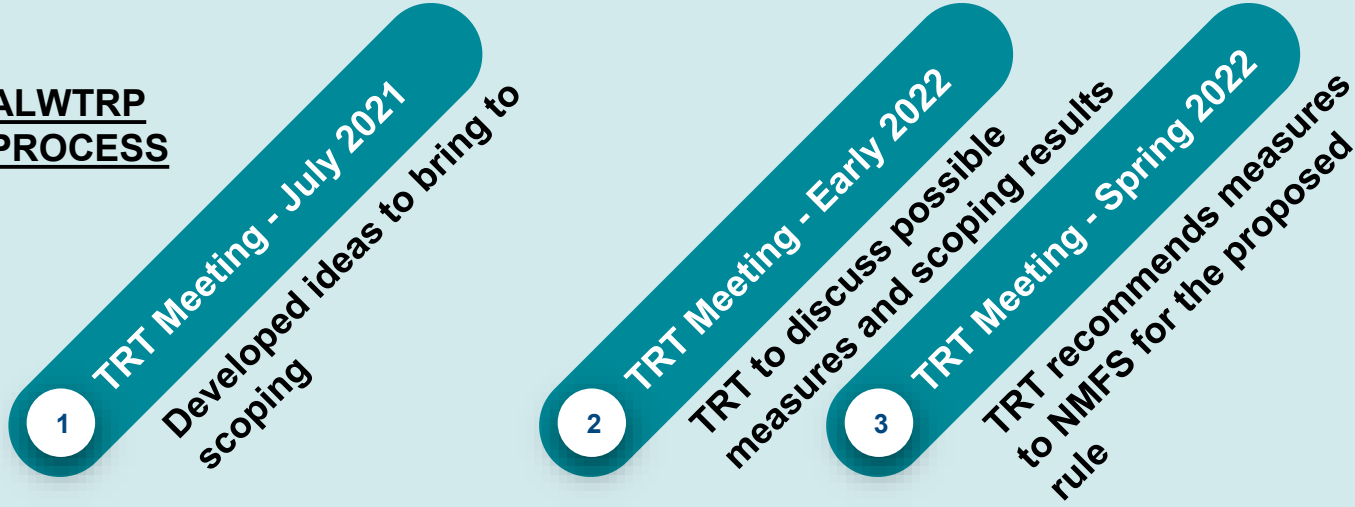
ALWTRT meetings began in spring of 2021

- Baseline distribution and risk
- Generated initial ideas (does not imply broad consensus for future team recommendations for rulemaking)



Phase 2 Modifications to the ALWTRP

ALWTRP PROCESS



RULEMAKING PROCESS

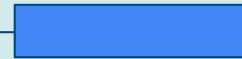
We are here



NEPA PROCESS

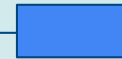
Scoping period

Proposed rule comment period



Draft EIS comment period

Final Rule 2023



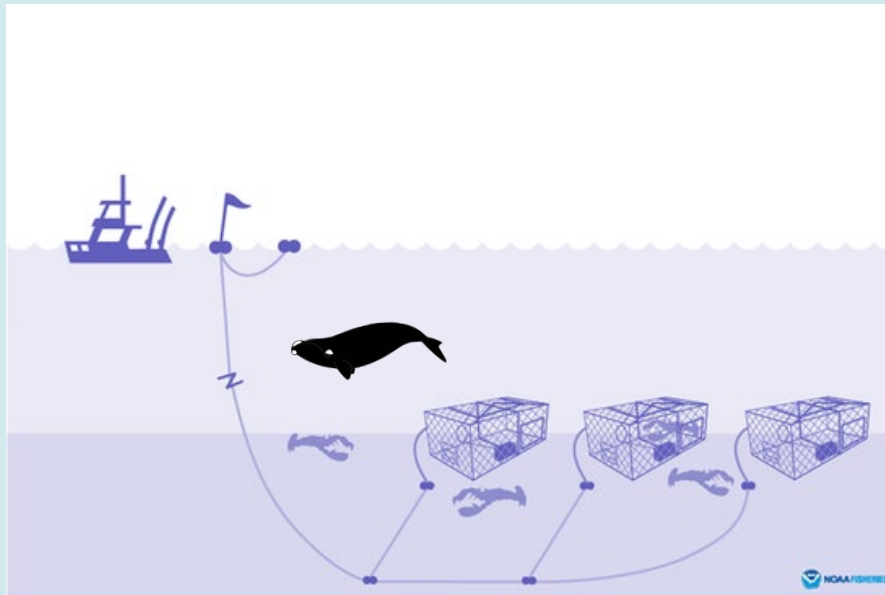
Final EIS comment period



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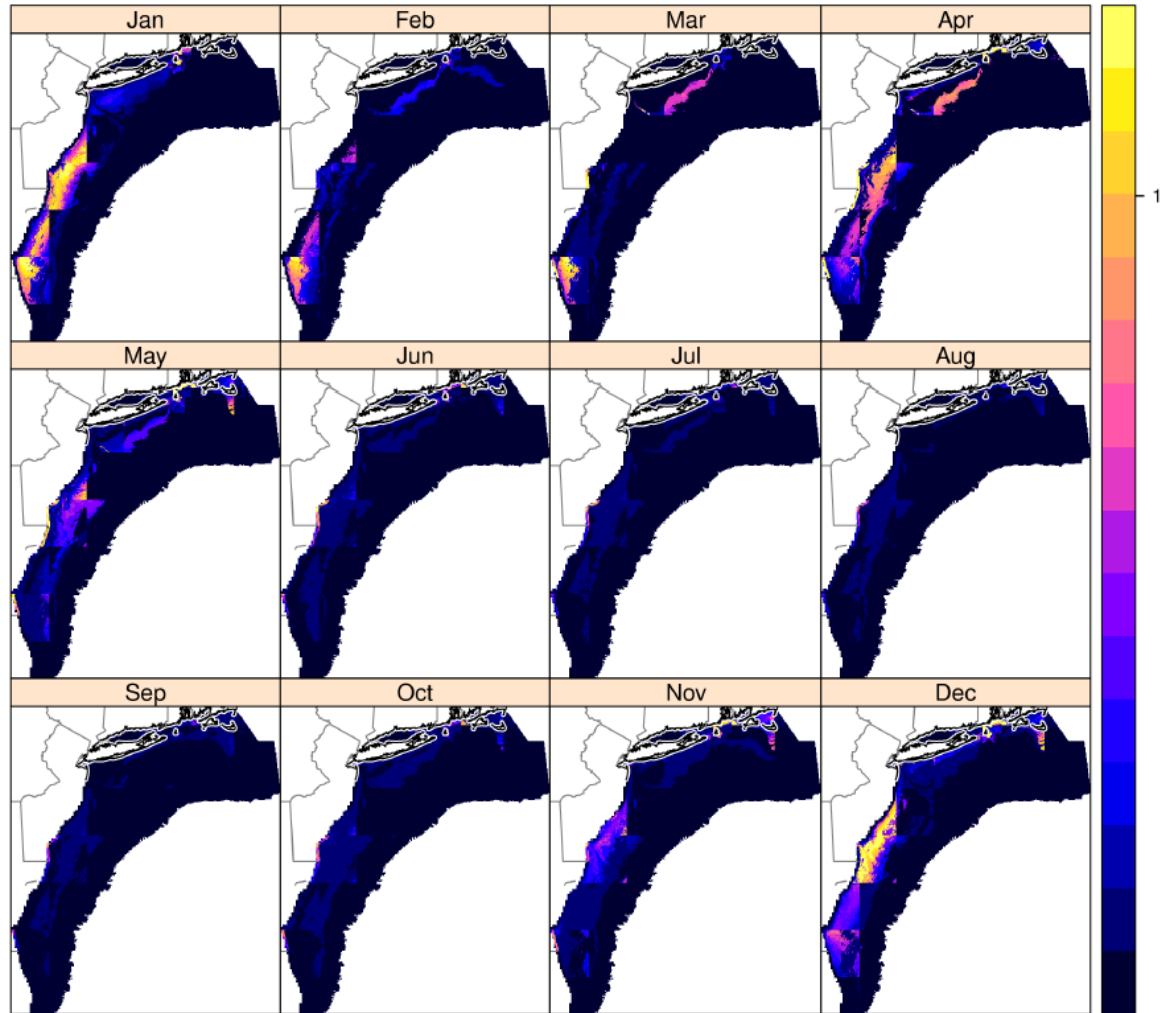
Analysis of co-occurrence

- **Decision Support Tool (NEFSC)**
- **Monthly co-occurrence = whale density x gear density**
 - **Right whale density:** predicted based on sightings and environmental data
 - **Gear density:** buoy lines



Mid-Atlantic & S. New England Trap/Pot Co- occurrence

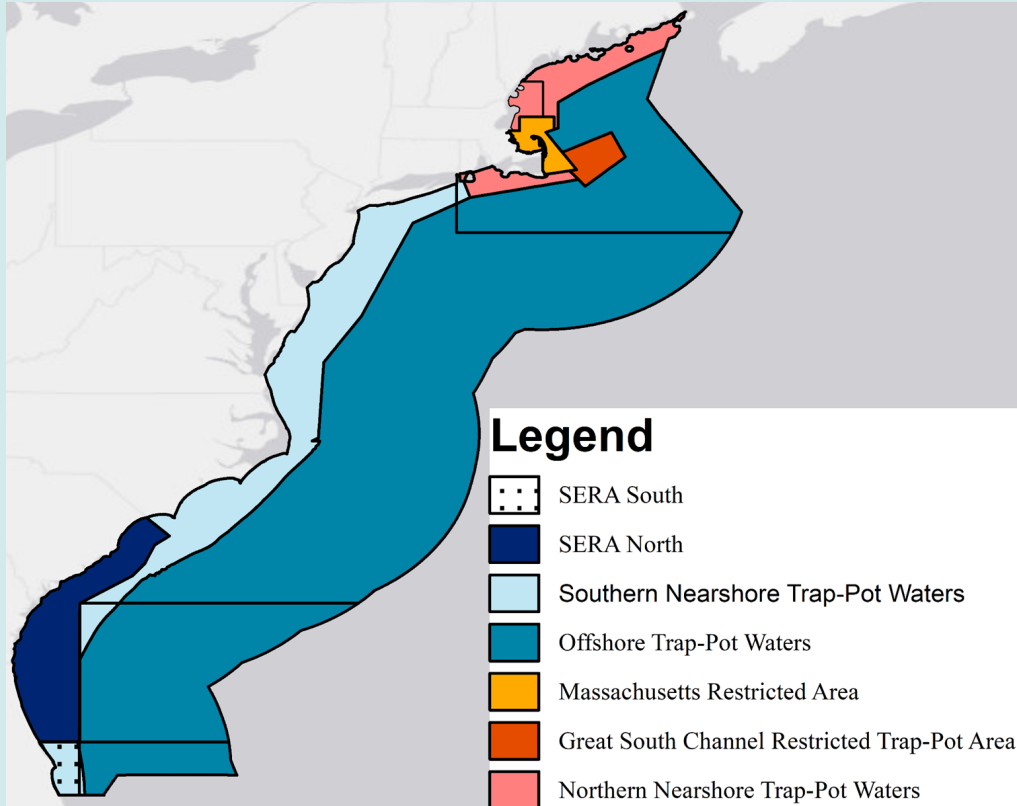
Total CoOccurrence Score, Log-Scaled - Default



Initial ideas for new measures

Ideas from individual ALWTRT members to get the conversation started

Reduce overlap between right whales and trap/pot gear



Change minimum traps/trawl

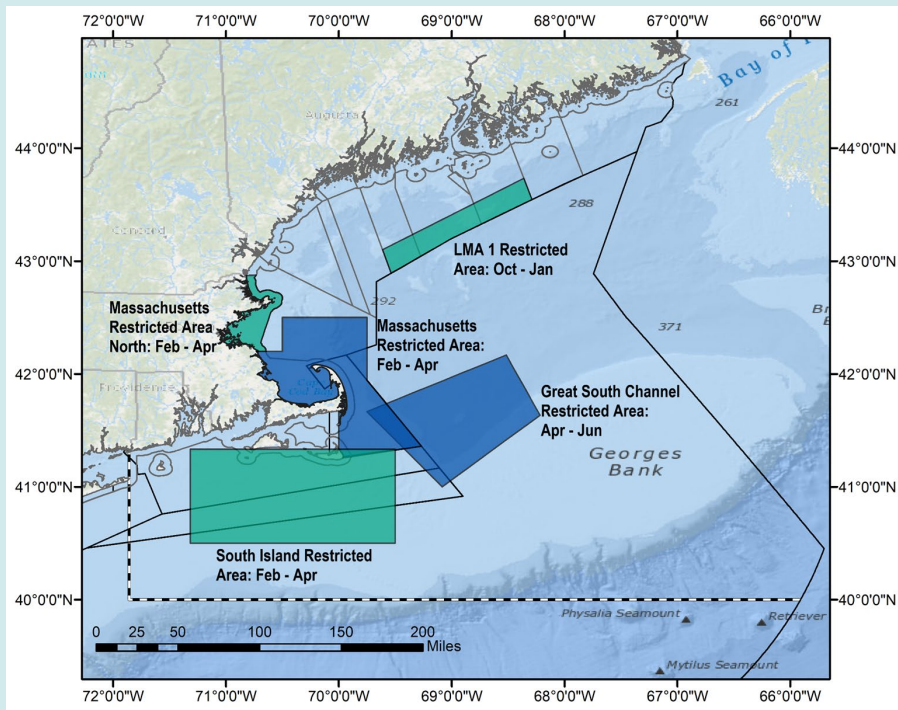
- Increase minimum traps/trawl (not in SE calving area)
- SE: Singles only with weaker gear

Trap caps

- Fish pots, blue crab, whelk
- Any fisheries with no cap

Extend Final Rule from Phase I to other trap/pot fisheries in NE

Scoping Topics for Restricted Areas



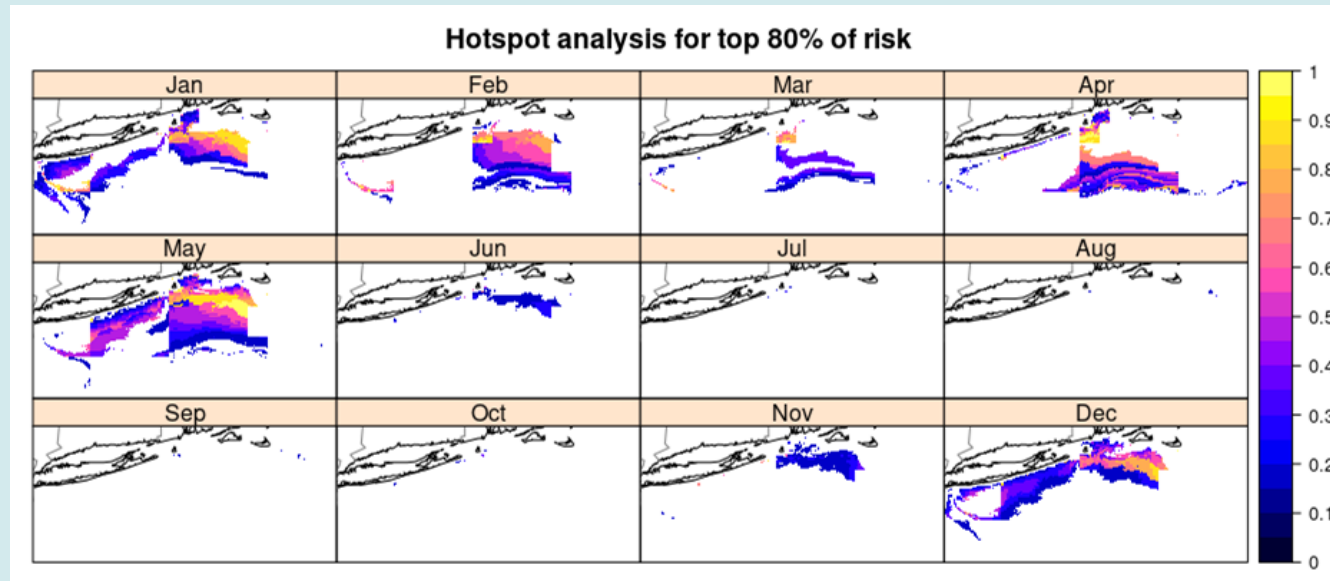
Re-evaluate existing restricted areas:

- Allow ropeless testing
- Re-evaluate boundaries or timing of existing closures
 - Great South Channel RA
 - Southeast RA North and South
- Include SE Black Sea Bass fishery management closures (SAFMC) in the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan

Scoping Topics for Restricted Area Risk Reduction

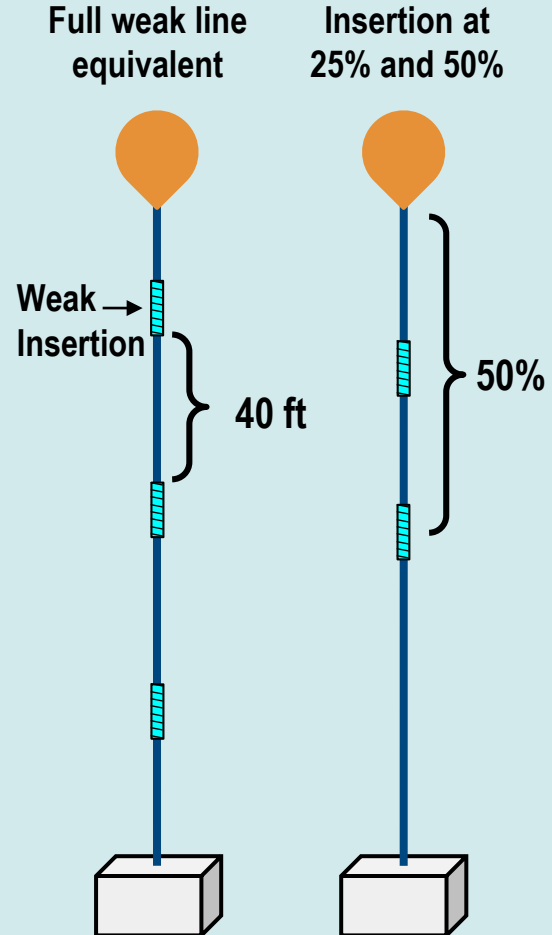
New areas based on hot spots:

- Rolling restricted areas or delayed fishing season up the coast in Mid-Atlantic with whale density
- Southern New England restricted area
- Dynamic management



Scoping Topics for Gear Strength

- Require maximum 1,700 lb breaking strength rope or regular inserts in buoy line (40-60 ft)
- Cap line diameter ($\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{5}{8}$ in. max to differentiate from Canada)



Scoping Topics for Gear Marking

Modify gear marking for greater visibility and greater resolution between:

- Different states
- State and Federal Waters
- U.S. vs Canada
- Gear type



Scoping Topics Involving Fishing Effort Management

- Cap latent effort in fisheries
- Cap and reduce number of traps
- Develop consequences for documented take



Input needed:

How to reduce right whale entanglement risk

- Input on the possible measures presented today
- Additional measures NMFS should consider to reduce right whale entanglement
 - Gear or effort reduction
 - Restricted areas
 - Reducing gear strength or lethality
 - Improving gear marking
- Information on whale distribution, ecology, and behavior
- Information on how you fish:
 - How long does it take you to modify your gear?
 - If you fish in an area that requires weak links, do you use them outside of the required period or do you re-rig your gear?
 - When do you maintain your gear?

After Tonight, How Can You Provide Input/Public Comment?

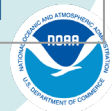
1. Written comment:

- a. Comments must be submitted by October 21, 2021.
- b. Written comments can be submitted at any time to nmfs.gar.alwtrt2021@noaa.gov

2. Scoping meeting schedule:

Date	Gear Type	States
Sept 9 (Thurs)	Trap/Pot	Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and Northern North Carolina
Sept 14 (Tues)	Trap/Pot	Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey
Sept 21 (Tues)	Trap/Pot	Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island
Sept 23 (Thurs)	Gillnets	Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey
Oct 5 (Tues)	Gillnets & Trap/Pot	Southern North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida
Oct 12 (Tues)	Gillnets	Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, and Northern North Carolina
Oct 14 (Thurs)	Gillnets	Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island

**Recordings of previous meetings will be available by using the registration link.*



How to Participate in Tonight's Meeting

Ground Rules

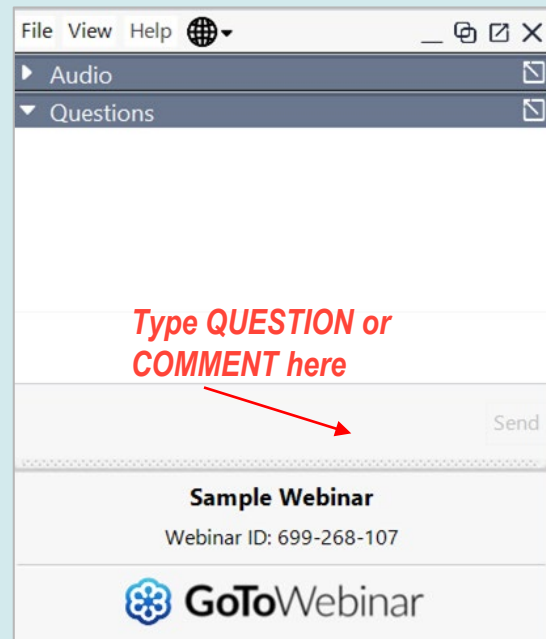
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- When you are called on you will be unmuted, then will need to unmute yourself.
- You may get in line for questions/comments at any time.

Questions

- We will have a ~15 min period for questions. We may take additional questions as time allows.
- If you have a question, type QUESTION in the Questions box. Please include the slide number or topic of your question.

Public Comment

- If you'd like to give public comment, type COMMENT in the Questions box. You may change your mind at any time. Type or say pass when your name is called.
- If you have already provided public comment but wish to give another, we reserve the right to put you at the end of the queue to give everyone an opportunity to speak.



Questions

