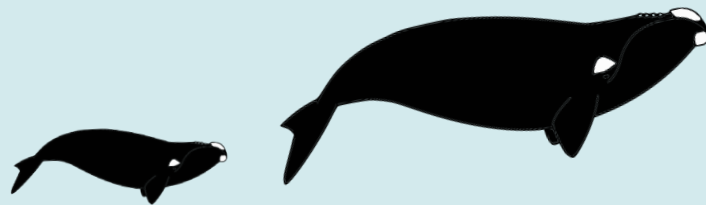


Scoping for Modifications to the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan: Phase 2

Mid-Atlantic and Southern New England Gillnet Fisheries
Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and Northern North Carolina
October 12, 2021

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Colleen Coogan



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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:

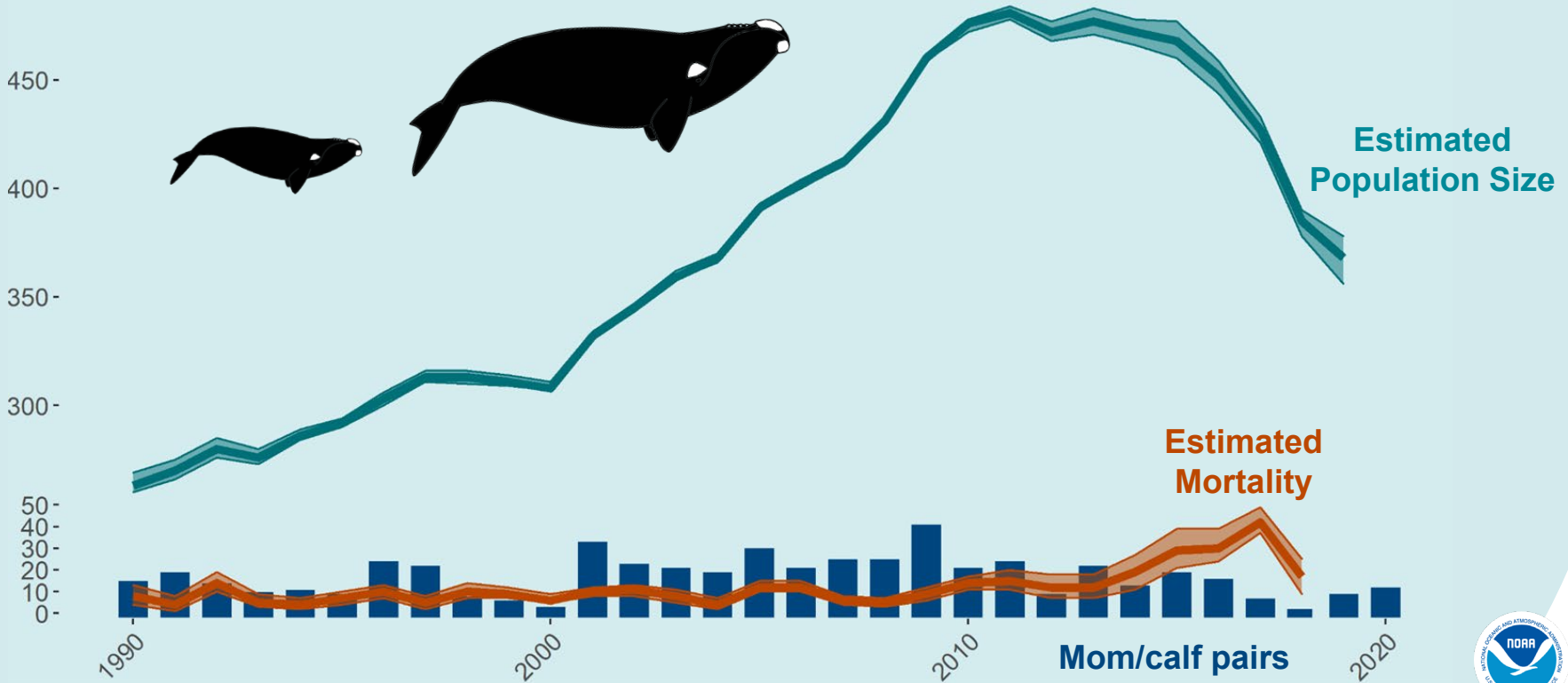
- Be respectful and direct comments at the presenters.
- When you are called on, we will un-mute you, and then you will need to un-mute yourself.
- Today's event is being recorded (including anything typed into the questions box) and will be available through the event registration page after the meeting.

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.

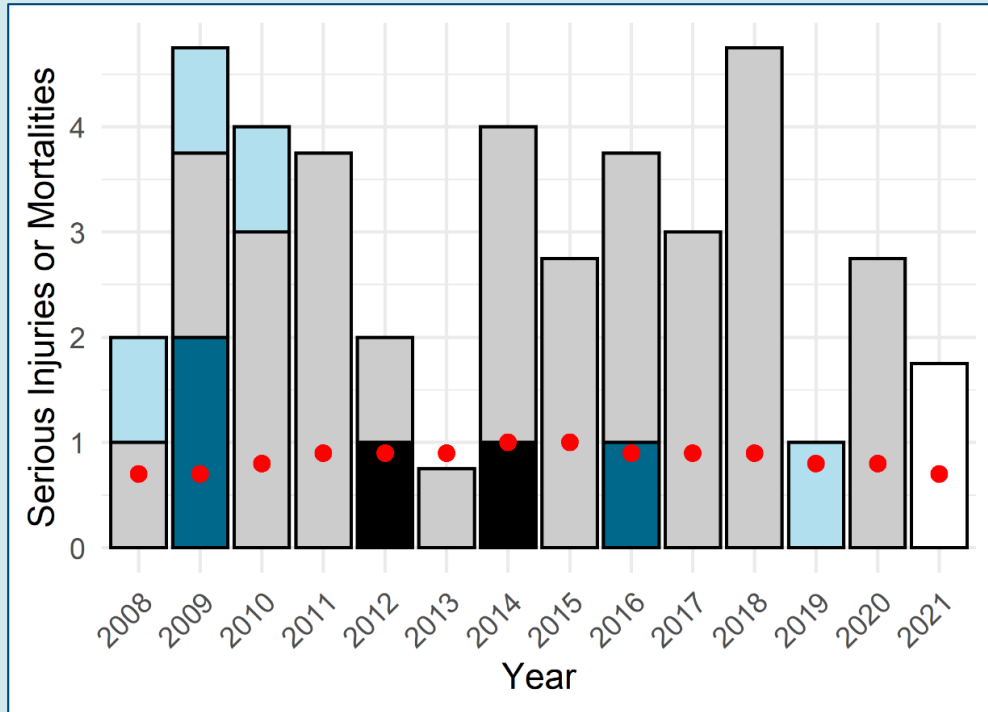
Note: the data here include 2 undetermined cases not included in the Unusual Mortality Event



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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



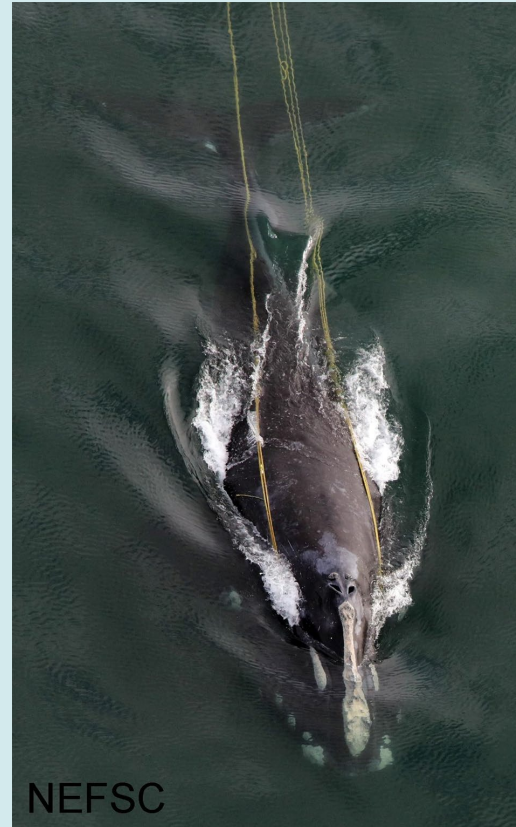
Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan

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

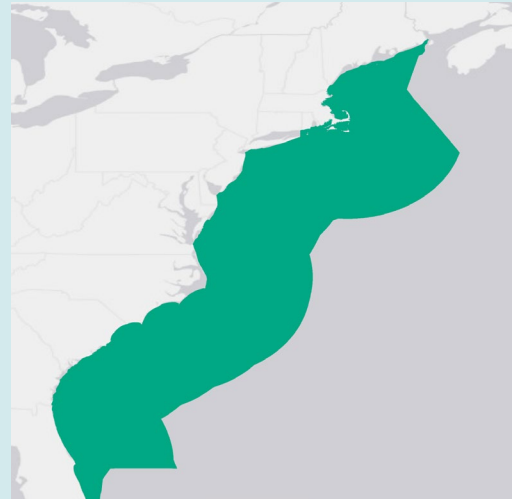
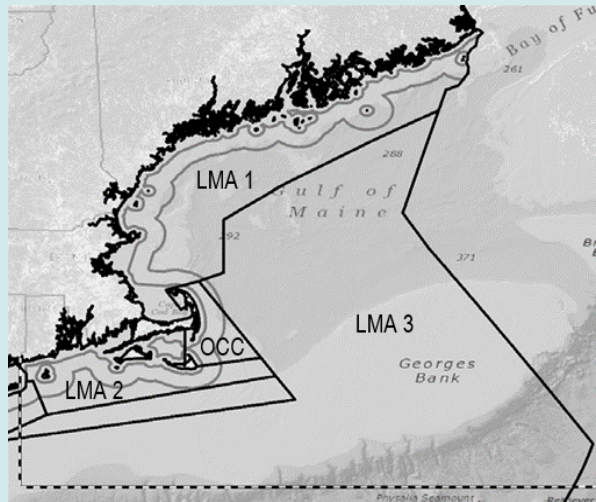
Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team

- 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



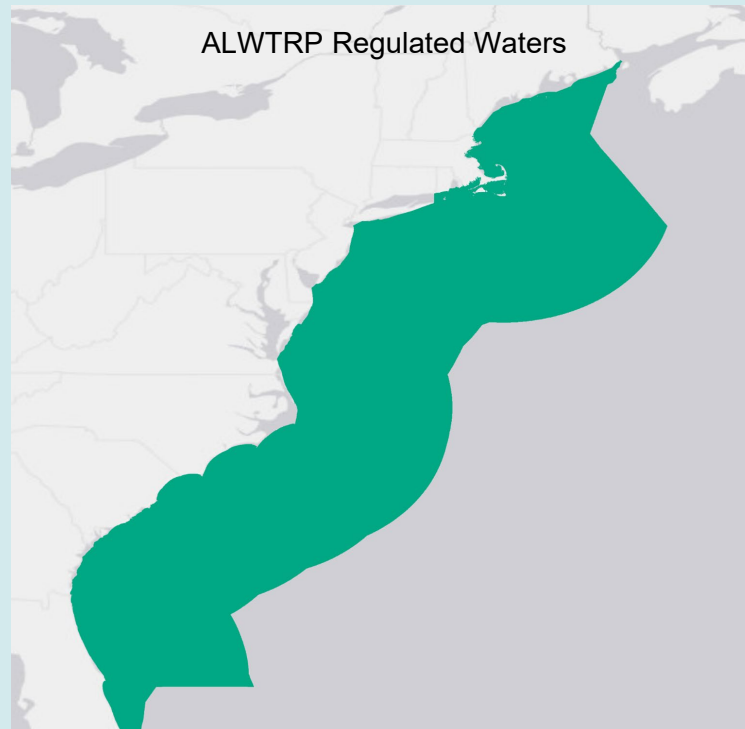
Phase 2: Overview

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)

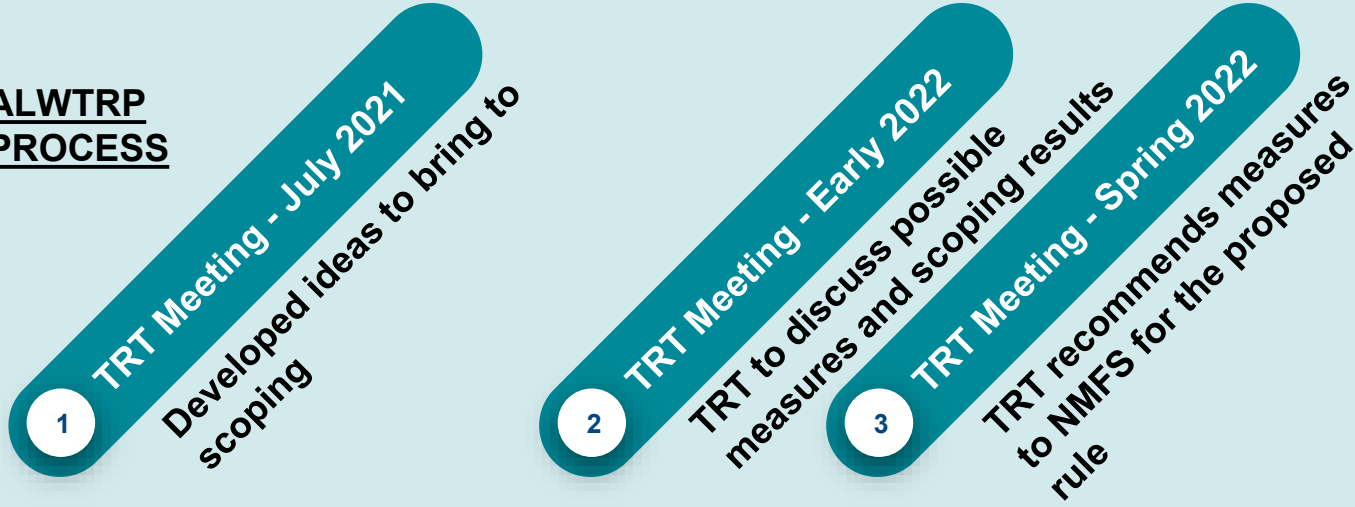
ALWTRT meetings began in spring of 2021

- 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

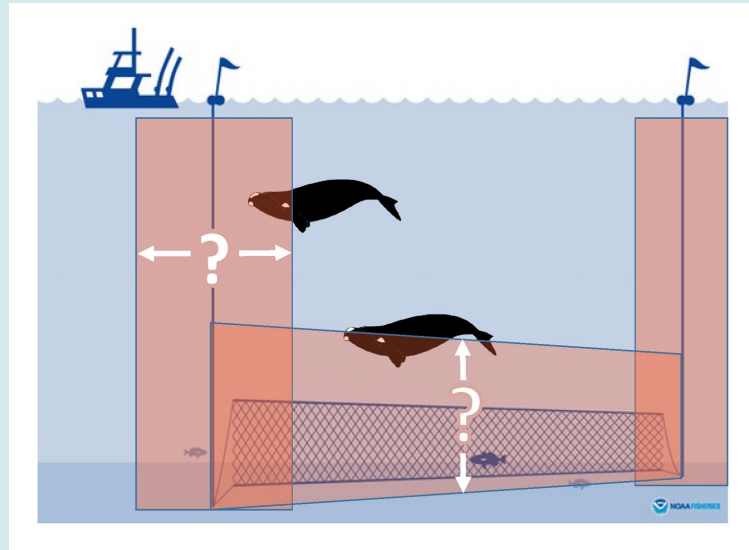
Final EIS
comment
period

Final Rule
2023



Analysis of co-occurrence

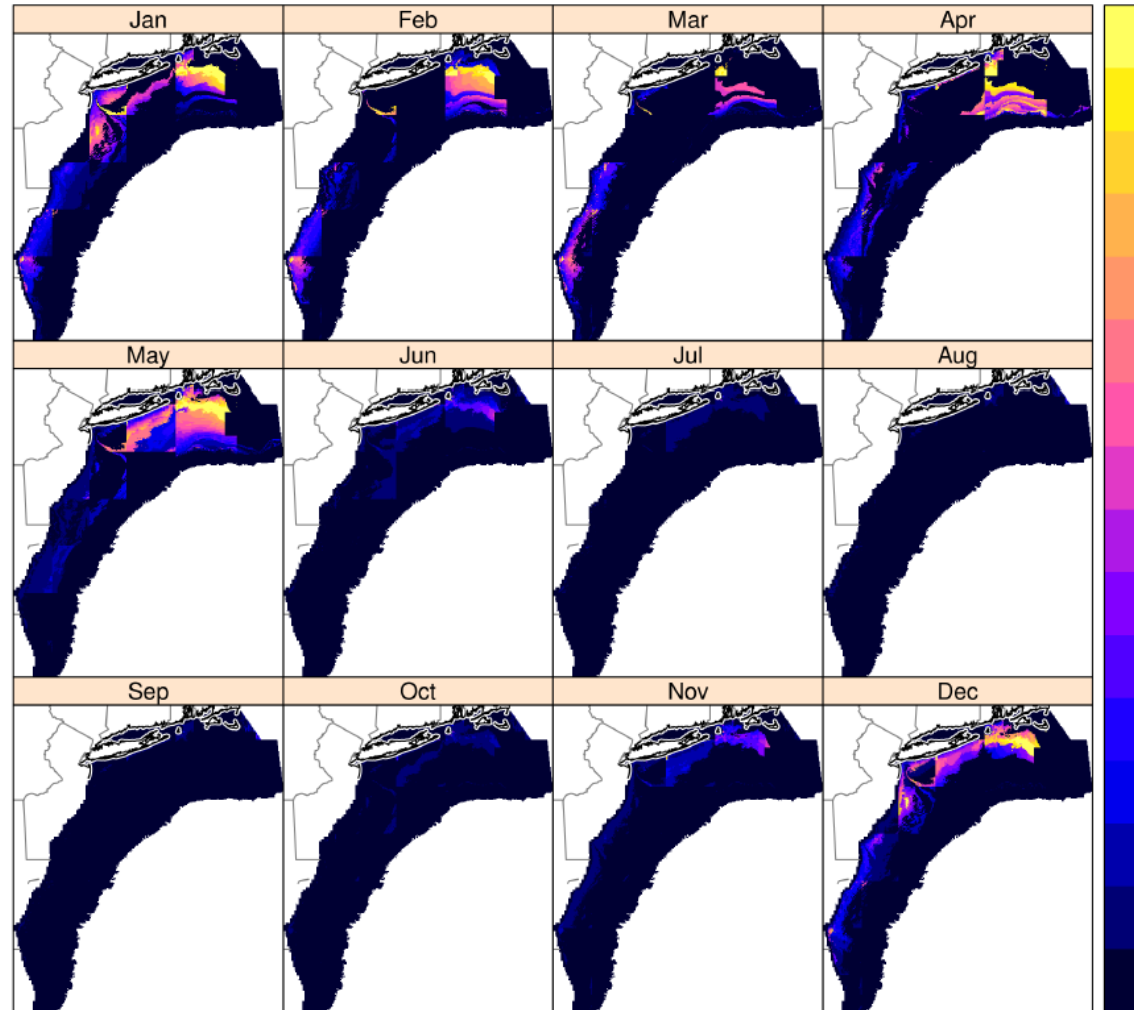
- **Decision Support Tool (NEFSC)**
 - **Reviewed by the Center for Independent Experts**
- **Monthly co-occurrence = whale density x gear density**
 - **Right whale density:** predicted based on sightings and environmental data
 - **Gear density:** buoy lines and nets (including net height)



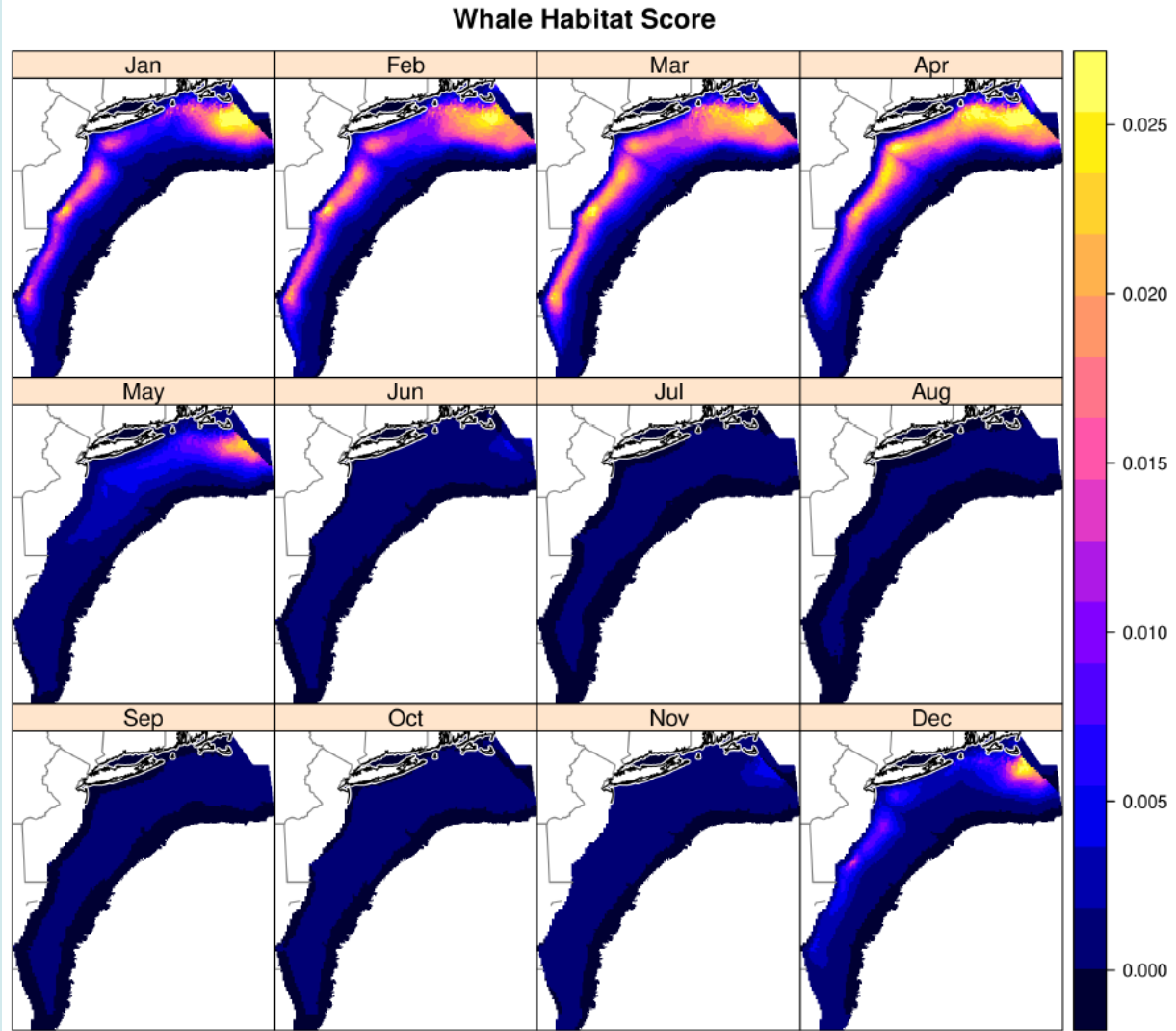
* More information on the Decision Support Tool can be found [here](#) and in this [webinar](#).

Mid-Atlantic & S. New England Gillnet Co-occurrence

Total CoOccurrence Score, Log-Scaled - Default



Mid-Atlantic & S. New England Whale Habitat Density



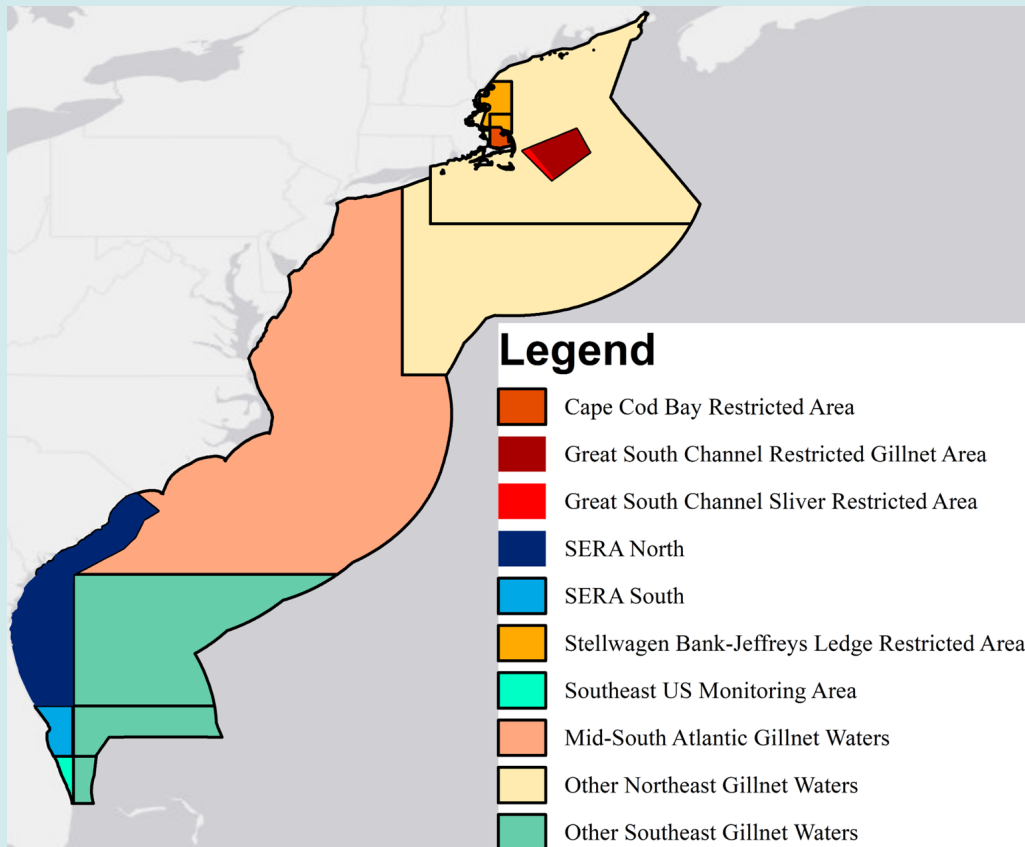
Initial ideas for new measures

Ideas from individual ALWTRT members to get the conversation started



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Reduce overlap between right whales and gillnet gear



Reduce soak times

Restrict overnight soaks

Minimum/maximum number of nets on a string

Evaluate the use of tie-downs

Hybrid ropeless gillnet

- E.g. one end ropeless, other end weak rope



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Scoping Topics for Restricted Areas



Re-evaluate existing restricted areas:

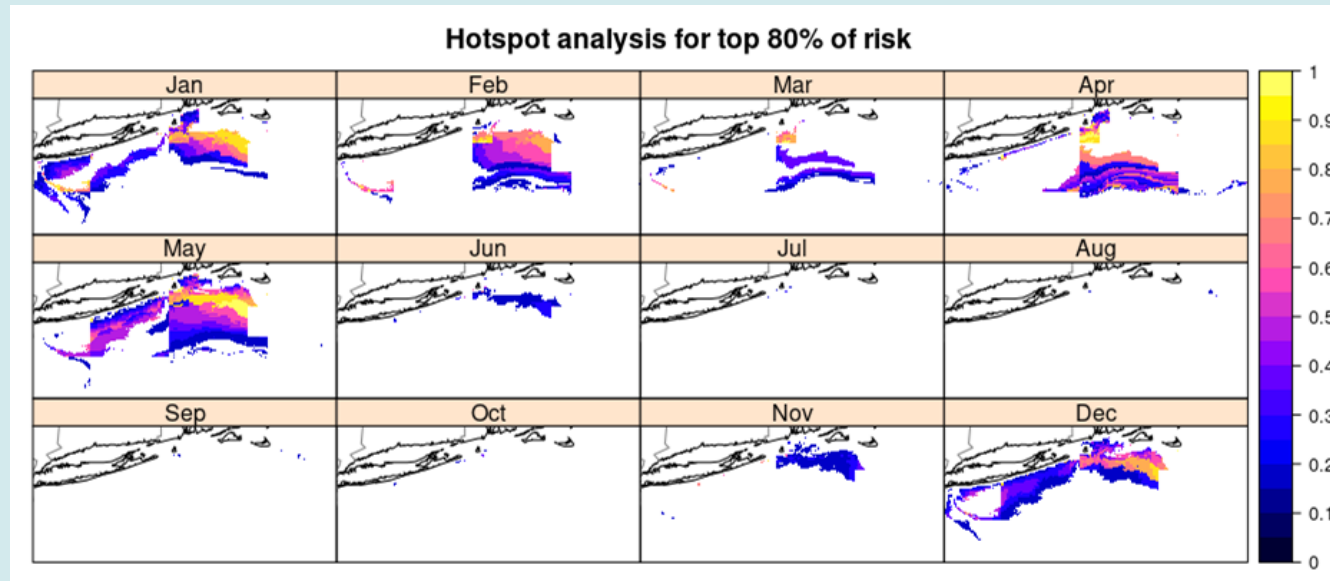
- Allow ropeless testing
- Re-evaluate boundaries or timing of existing closures
 - Great South Channel RA
 - Southeast RA North and South
 - Cape Cod Bay RA



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 (currently not feasible)



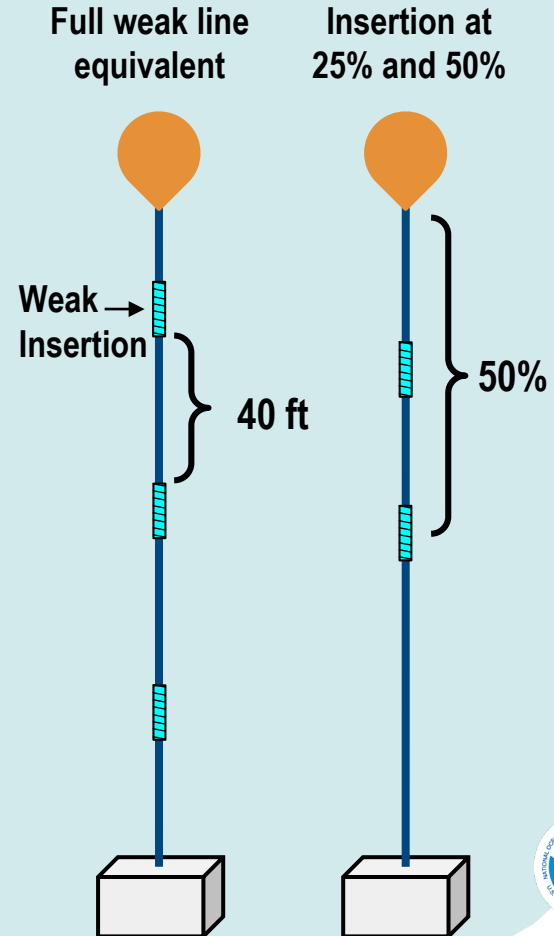
Phase 2: Scoping Topics for Gear Strength

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)

Expand gear modifications such as weak inserts in gillnets to year round in the mid- Atlantic

Weaker weak inserts with a smaller anchor in gillnet panels



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



Phase 2: Scoping Topics Involving Fishing Effort Management

- Cap latent effort in gillnet fisheries
- Consider limited entry for open access fisheries, e.g. skate fishery
- Reduce soak times
- Implement minimum/maximum number of nets on a string
- Consider challenges determining effort and managing unmanaged fisheries (eg. striped mullet, blue catfish caught in gillnets)
- Develop consequences for documented take



Input needed: How to reduce large whale entanglement risk

- Input on the possible measures presented today
- Additional measures NMFS should consider to reduce right whale entanglement risk
 - Gear or effort reduction
 - Restricted areas
 - Reducing gear strength or lethality
- Improving gear marking - better resolution of where incidents occur
- Whale distribution, ecology, or behavior related to entanglement risk

Input needed:

Gillnet Operational information that would be helpful

- **Gear marking**
 - Marking time burden
 - Mark your line at the dock or at the sea?
 - Annual marking materials costs?
- **Soak hours**
 - Average soak hours, overnight soak?
 - Potential catch impacts?
- **Weak inserts**
 - Sleeves or knots?
 - Time burden
- **Number of nets on a string**
 - Current length
 - Reconfiguration time burden
 - Potential catch impacts
- **Restricted areas**
 - Suspend fishing or relocation?
 - Potential catch impacts?
- **Ropeless gear**
 - Are you willing to test ropeless gear?
 - Concerns for you to adopt ropeless technology?
 - Highest total cost you could accept for your vessel?

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

Written comment:

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

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

[Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan Website](#)

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



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How to Participate in Tonight's Meeting

Ground Rules

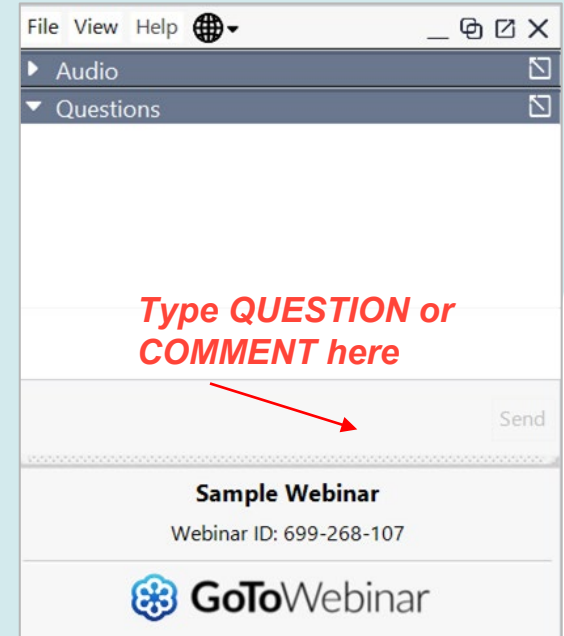
- We will be recording this webinar.
- Be respectful and direct comments at the presenters.
- When you are called on you will be unmuted, then will need to unmute yourself.
- You may get in line for questions/comments at any time.

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

