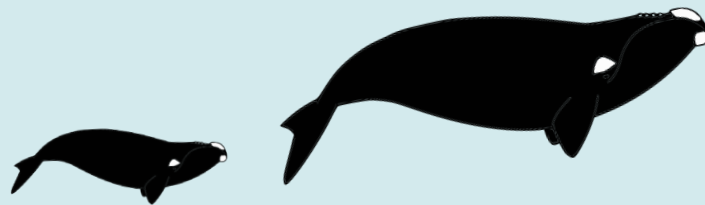


Scoping for modifications to the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan: Phase 2

Southeast Public Scoping Meeting
October 5, 2021

Marisa Trego
Kara Shervanick
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Jen Goebel
Chao Zou
Crystal Franco
Colleen Coogan



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



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:

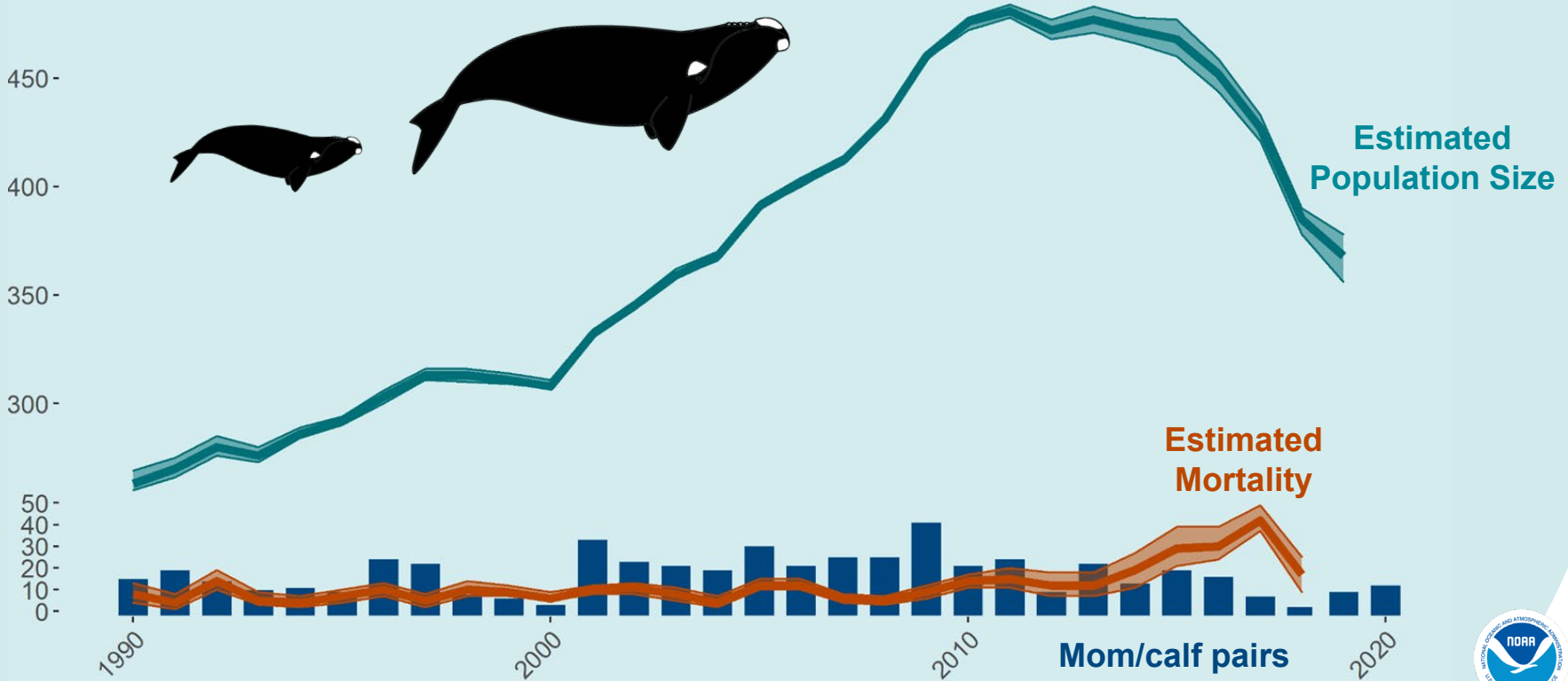
- Be respectful and direct comments at the presenters.
- When you are called on, we will un-mute you, and then you will need to un-mute yourself.
- Today's event is being recorded (including anything typed into the questions box) and will be available through the event registration page after the meeting.

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)

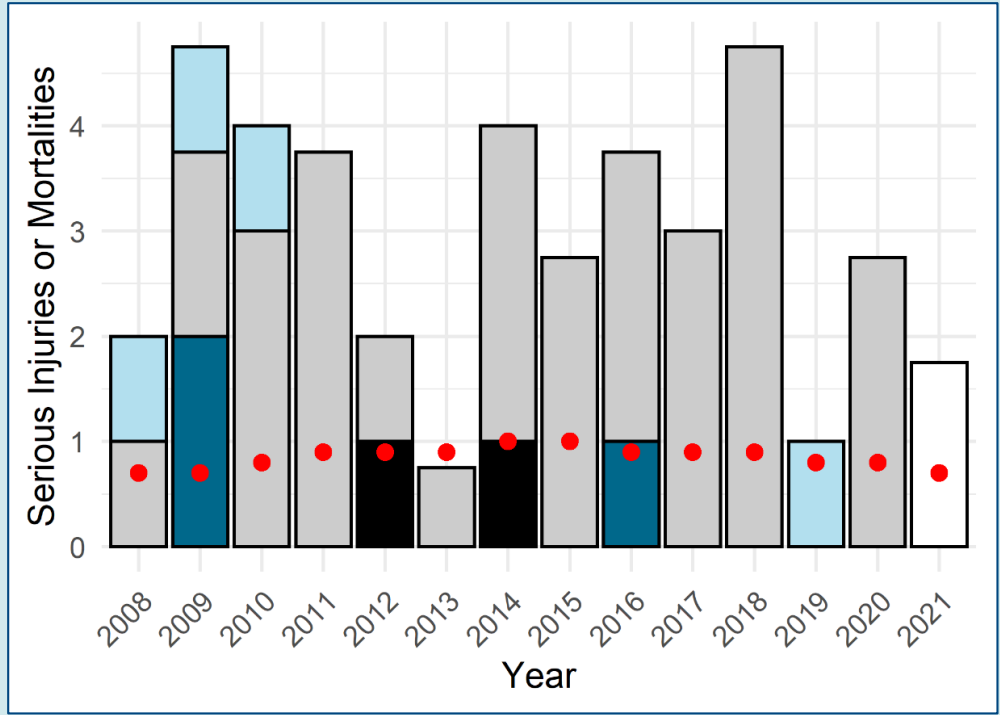
2 cause undetermined (2 US)

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

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***



- Disentangled, First Seen US
- Serious Injury or Mortality, First Seen US
- Disentangled US
- Serious Injury or Mortality, US
- Tentative First Seen US Serious Injury

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



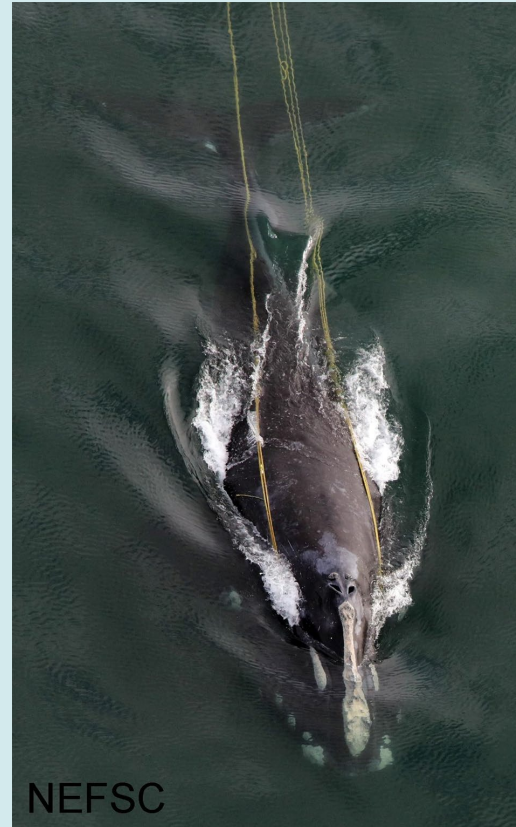
Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan

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

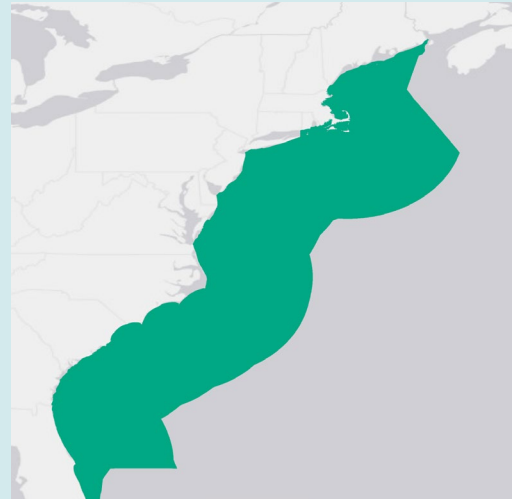
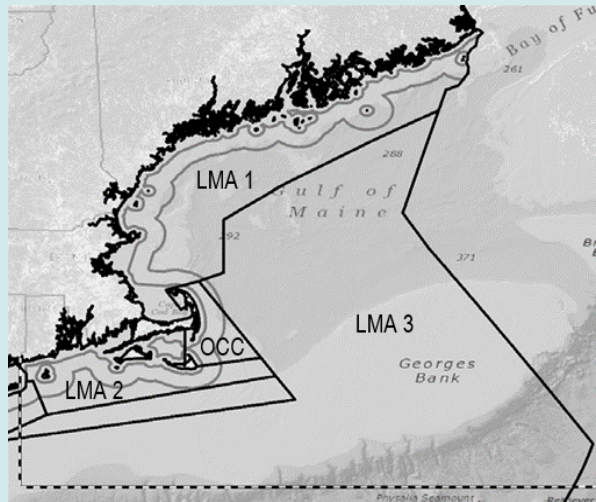
Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team

- 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



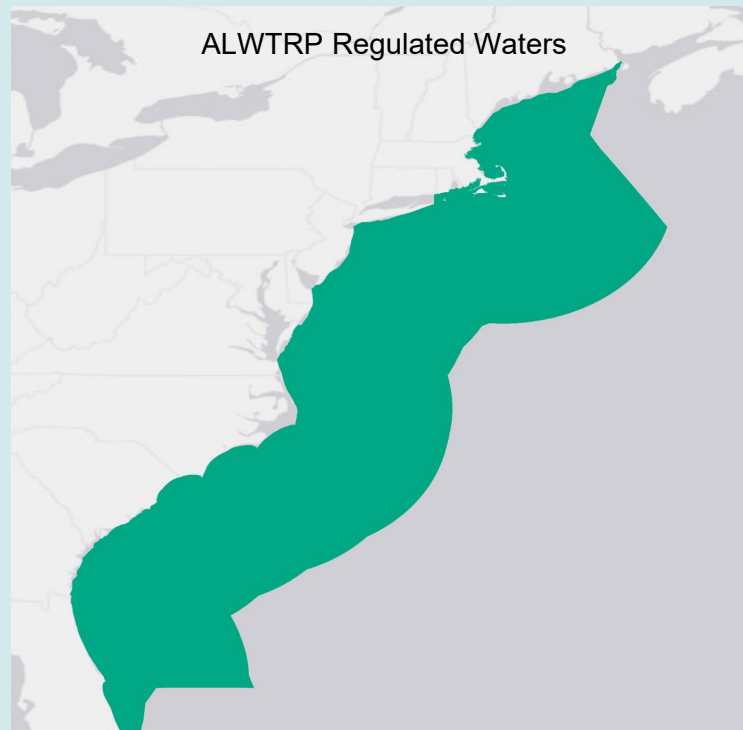
Phase 2: Overview

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)

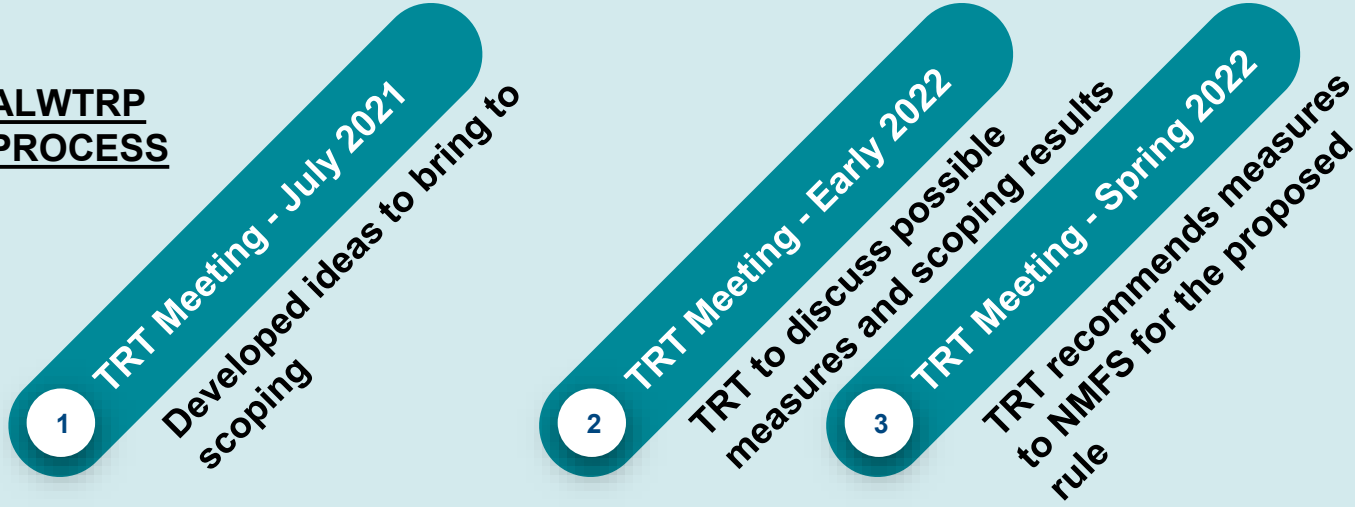
ALWTRT meetings began in spring of 2021

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

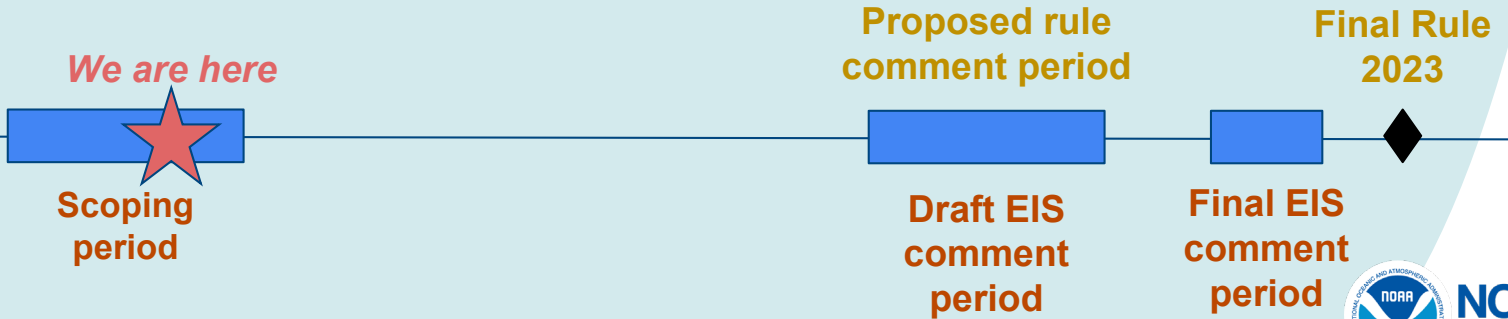


Phase 2 Modifications to the ALWTRP

ALWTRP PROCESS



RULEMAKING PROCESS

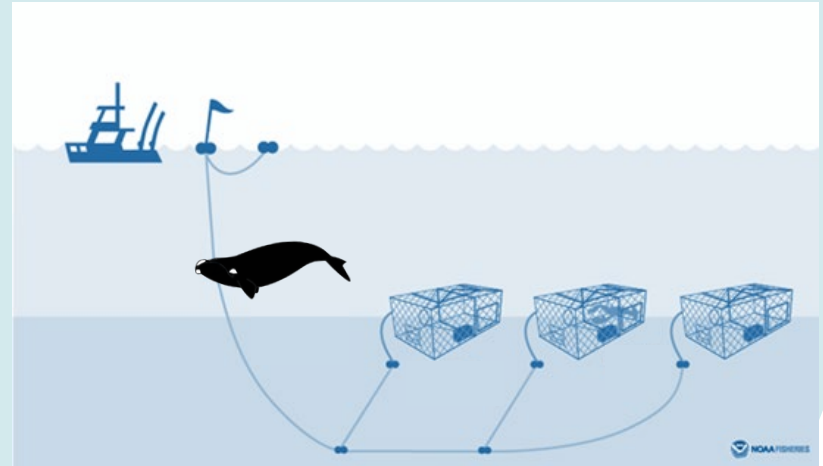
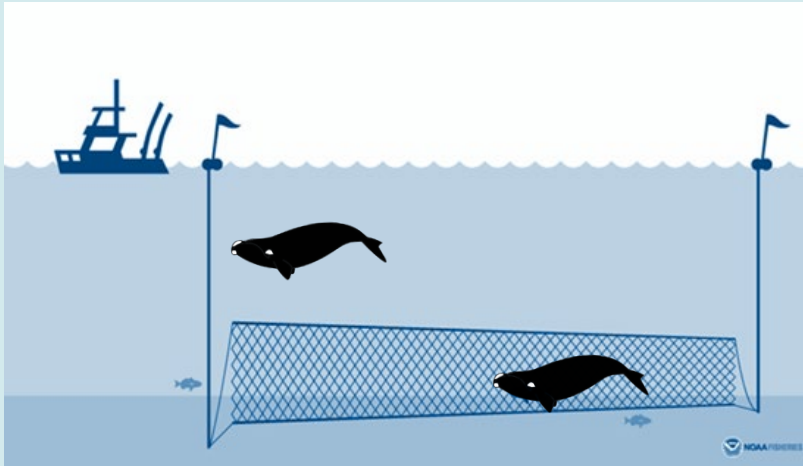


NEPA PROCESS



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)



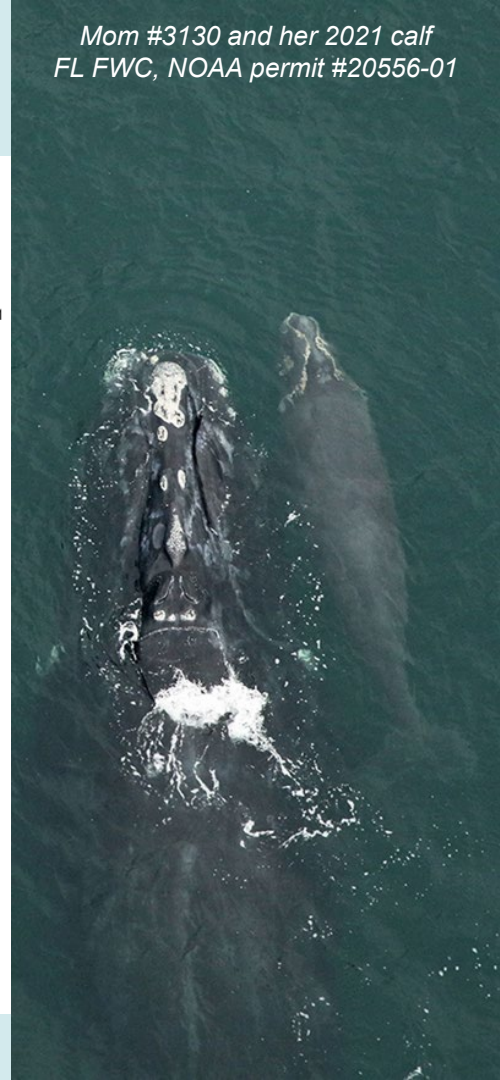
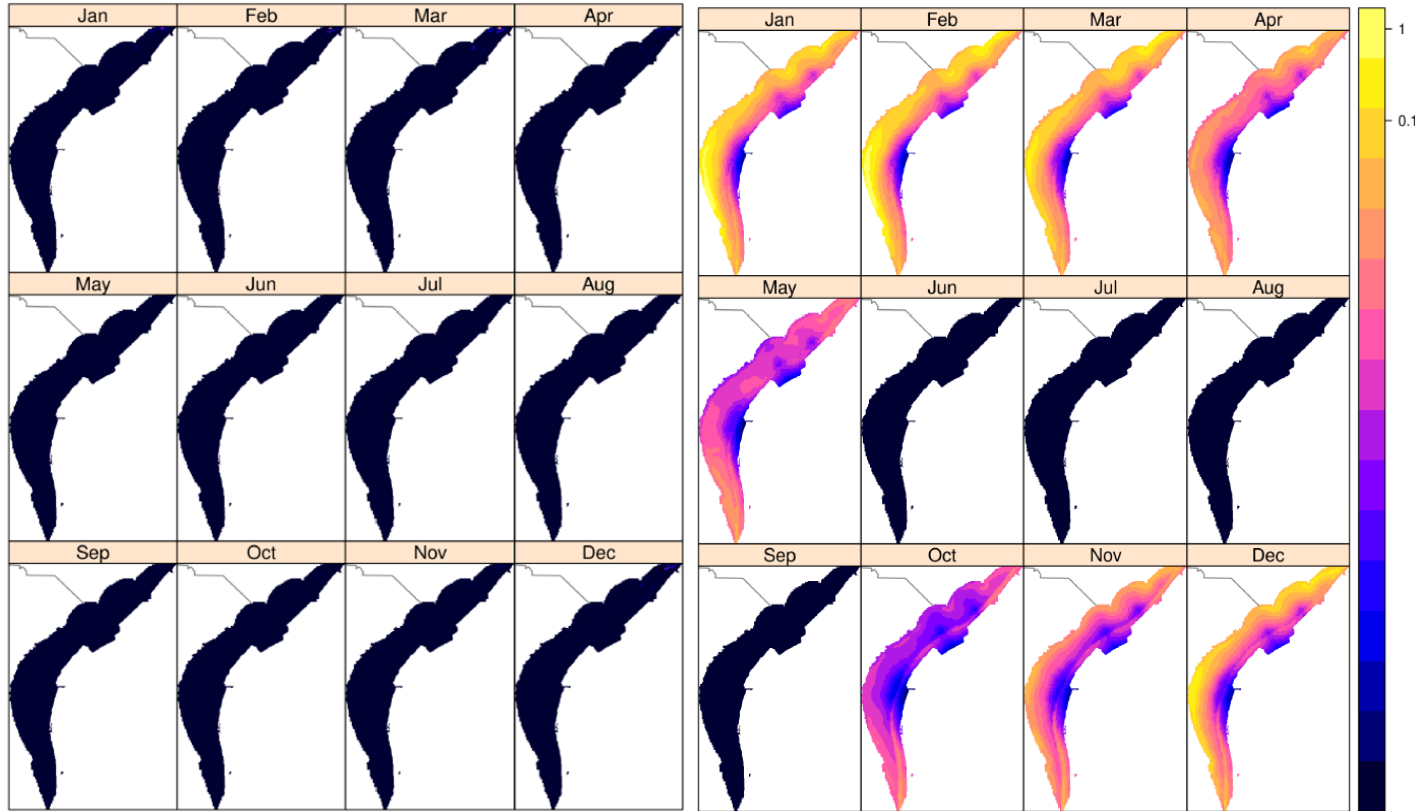
* More information on the Decision Support Tool can be found [here](#) and in this [webinar](#).

Southeast Whale Habitat Density

Mom #3130 and her 2021 calf
FL FWC, NOAA permit #20556-01

Total CoOccurrence Score, Log-Scaled - Default

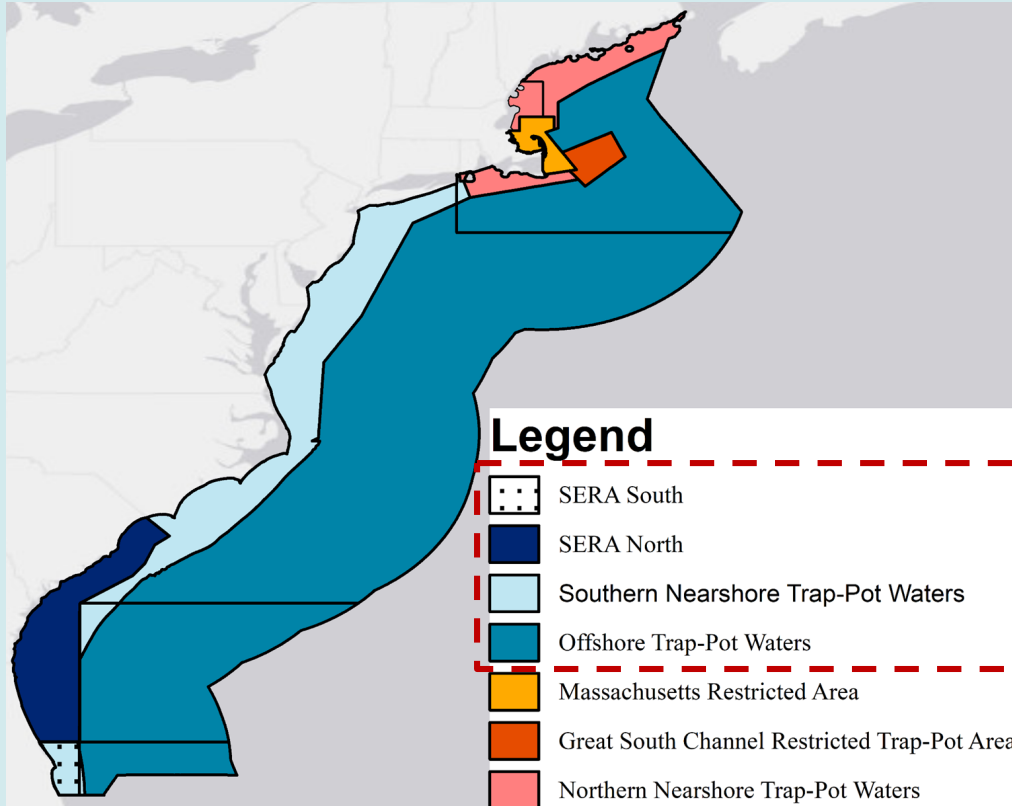
Whale Habitat Score, Log-Scaled



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

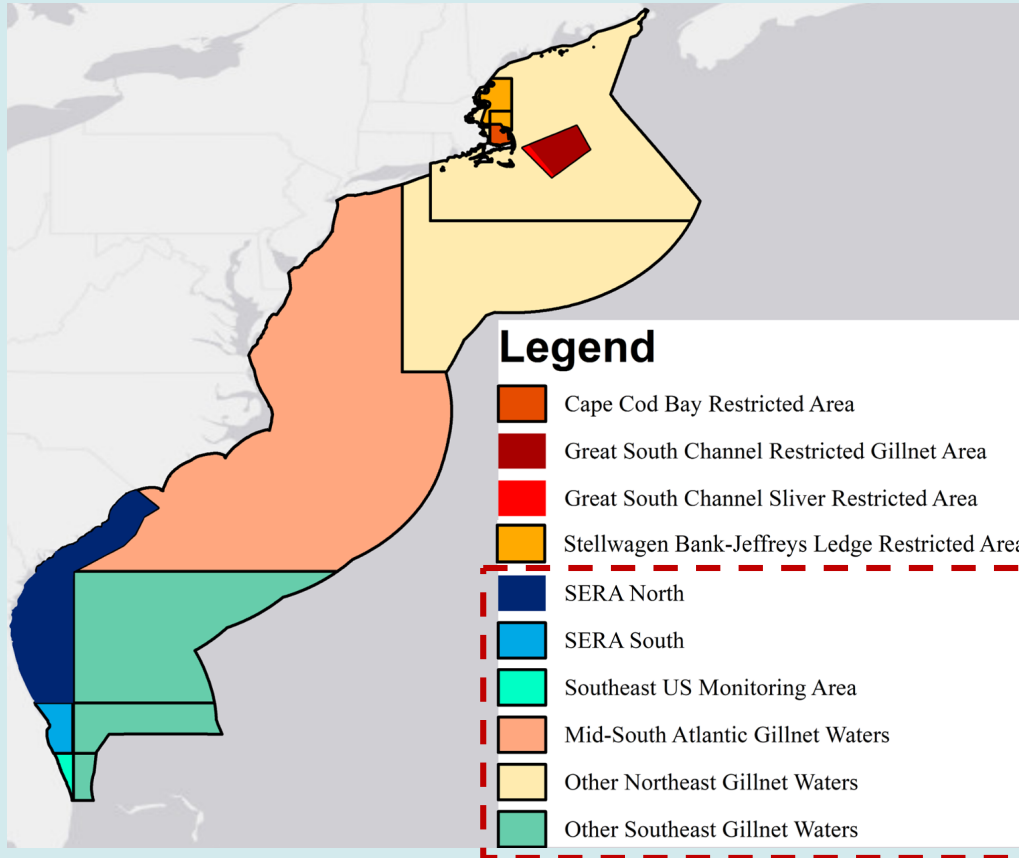
- Increase minimum traps/trawl (not in SE calving area)
- SE: Singles only with weaker gear

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

Reduce overlap between right whales and gillnet gear



Reduce soak times

Restrict overnight soaks

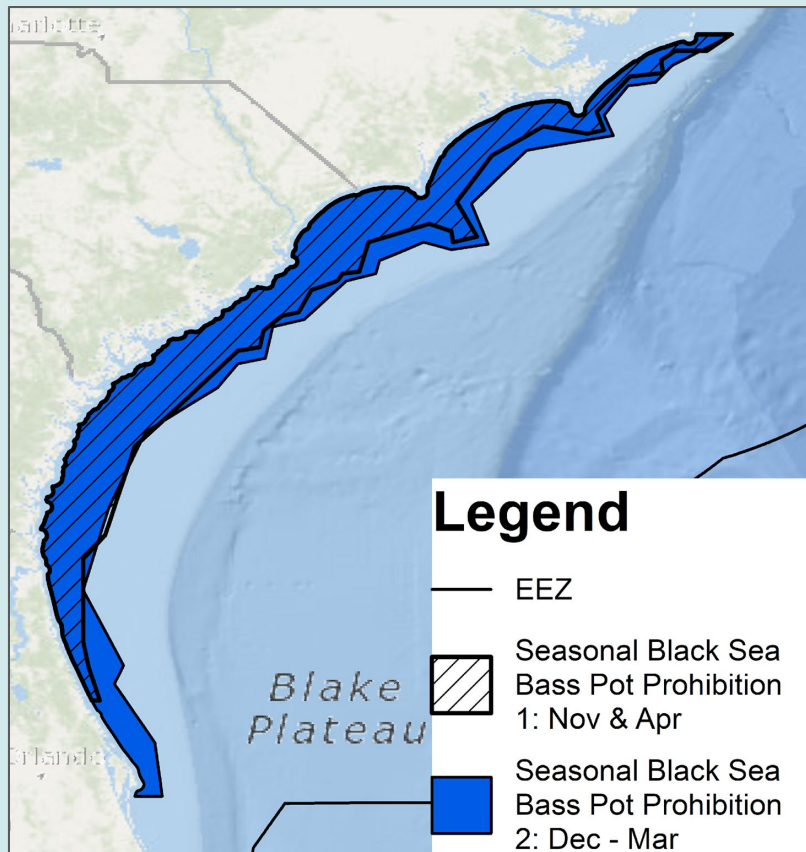
Minimum/maximum number of nets on a string

Evaluate the use of tie-downs

Hybrid ropeless gillnet

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

Scoping Topics for Restricted Areas



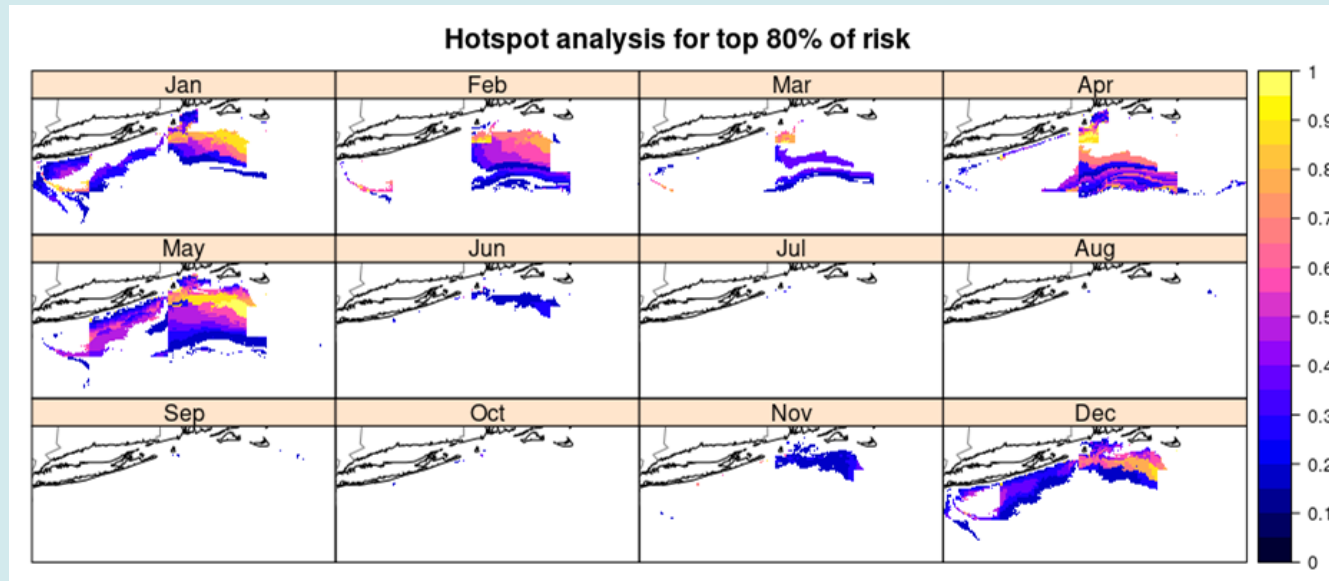
Re-evaluate existing restricted areas:

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

Scoping Topics for Restricted Area Risk Reduction

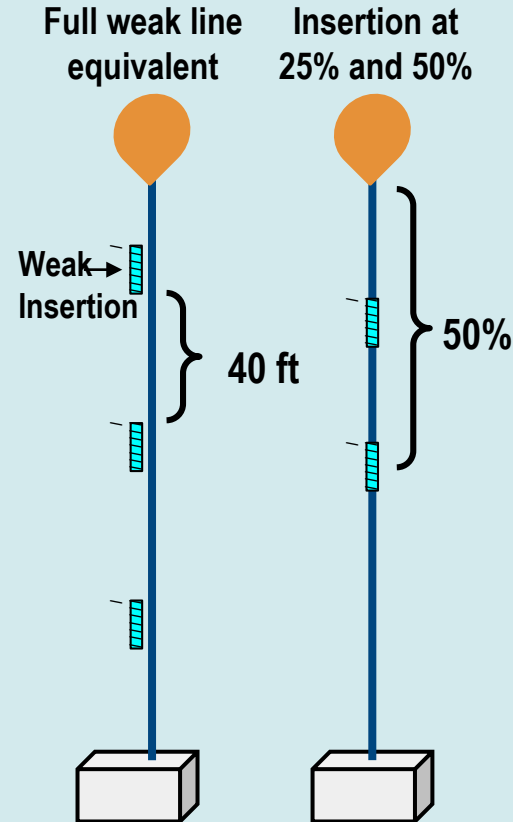
New areas based on hot spots:

- Rolling restricted areas or delayed fishing season up the coast in Mid-Atlantic with whale density
- Southern New England restricted area
- Dynamic management (currently not feasible)

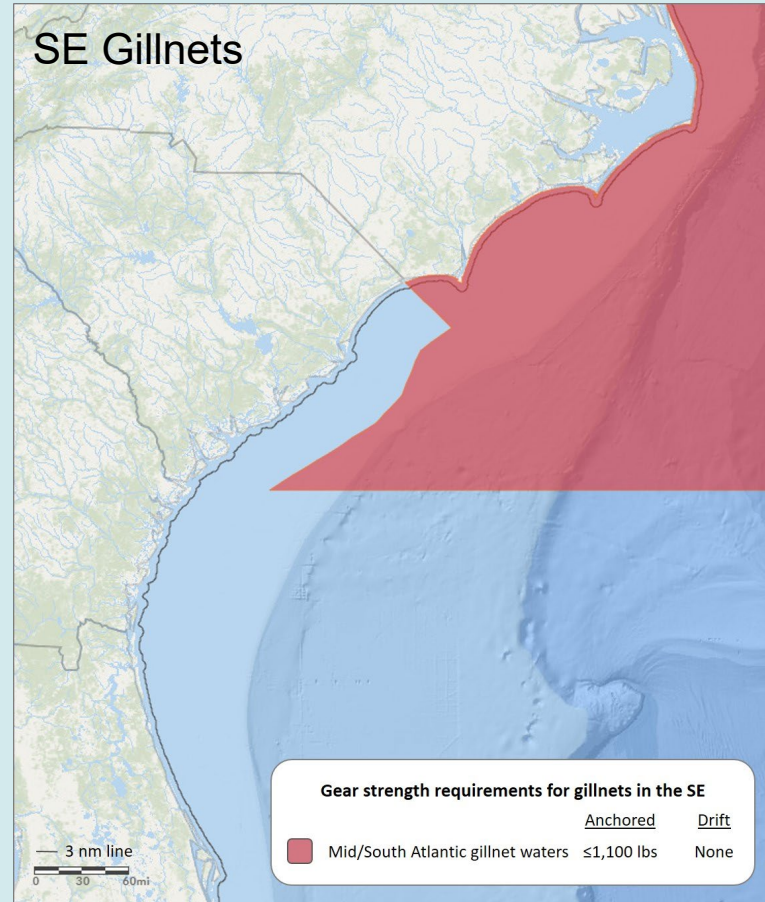
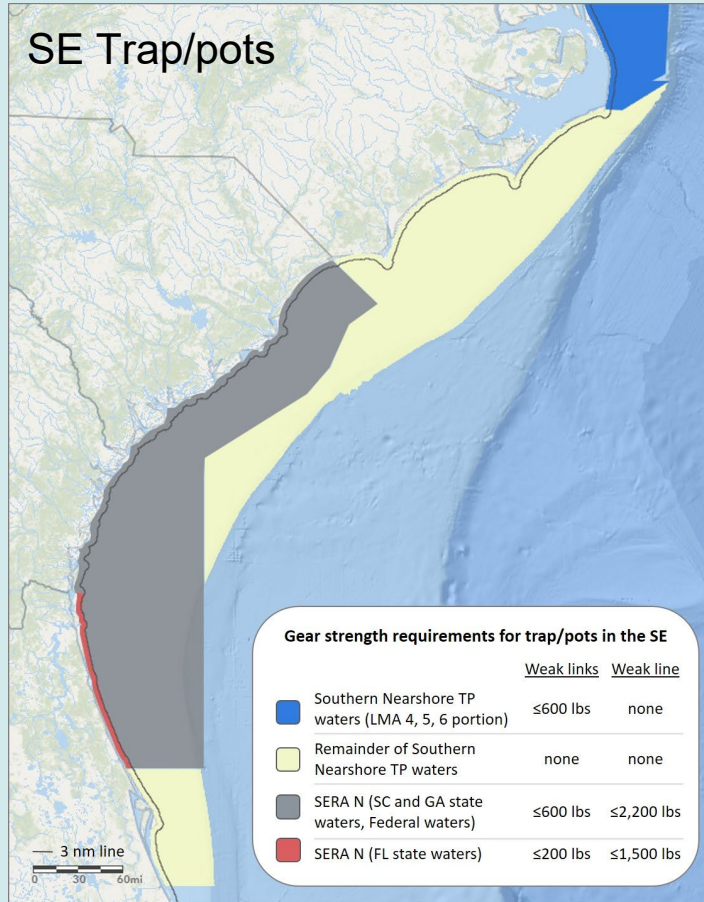


Phase 2: Scoping Topics for Gear Strength

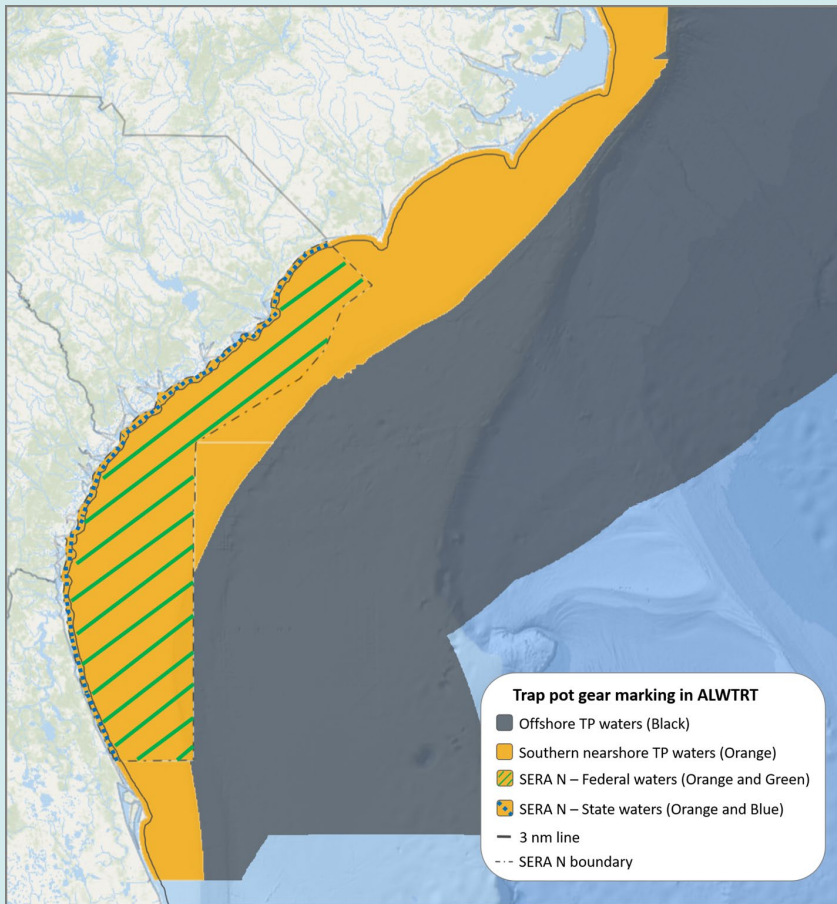
- Require maximum 1,700 lb breaking strength rope or regular inserts in buoy line (40-60 ft)
- Cap line diameter ($\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{5}{8}$ in. max to differentiate from Canada)
- Expand gear modifications such as weak inserts in gillnets to year round in the mid- Atlantic
- Weaker weak inserts with a smaller anchor in gillnet panels



Phase 2: Scoping Topics for Gear Strength



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 triggers for documented take in critical habitat or restricted area



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

Input needed: Operational information that would be helpful

- **Gillnet characteristics**

- How many nets on a string on average do you use?
- What is the total length of your gear on average?
- Are you using weak links? Do you re-rig your gear outside of the weak link requirement period? If so how long does it take you?
- How long are you soaking your gear on average?
- Are you soaking overnight?

- **Trap/pot characteristics**

- What line do you use? (diameter, brand/manufacturer, etc.)
- Do you re-rig your gear outside of the weak link requirement period? If so how long does it take you?
- How many pots are you fishing on average at any given time?

- **Gear marking**

- How long does it take to mark your lines?
- How frequently do you mark your lines?
- How do you mark your lines?
- Where do you mark your lines (at the dock or at the sea)?
- How much does it cost you to mark your lines?

- **Restricted areas**

- Would you suspend fishing or relocate your gear to new area?
- Potential catch impacts?

- **Ropeless gear**

- Would you consider using/testing ropeless gear?
- Concerns for you to adopt ropeless technology?
- How many end units would you need?
- Assuming 10-year life span, what is the total highest investment you could accept?



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

Speak to someone during Call-In days: (978) 282-8479

Tuesday, October 12, 2021, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. EST

Your phone call may be recorded to fully capture your input. If the phone line is busy, please leave a voicemail. Please note that the phone line WILL NOT be operational outside of these days and hours.

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

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



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

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

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FISHERIES

How to Participate in Tonight's Meeting

Ground Rules

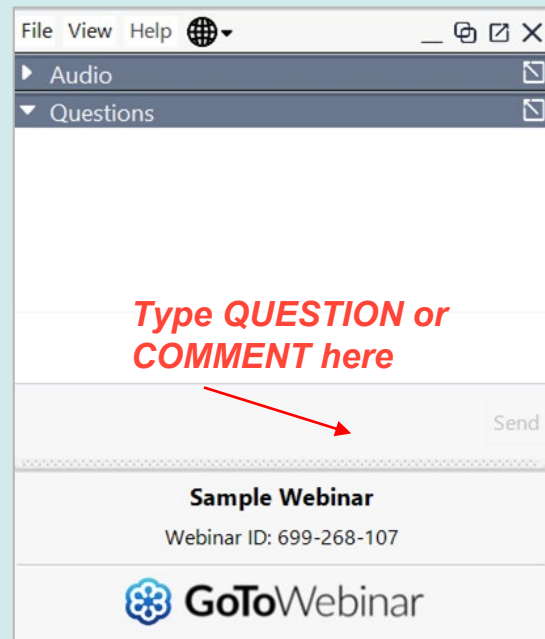
- We will be recording this webinar.
- Be respectful and direct comments at the presenters.
- When you are called on you will be unmuted, then will need to unmute yourself.
- You may get in line for questions/comments at any time.

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.



Input needed: Operational information that would be helpful

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Questions

