



**NOAA
FISHERIES**

**Southeast
Region**

Pelagic Longline Take Reduction Plan

September 7, 2023

Erin.Fougeres@noaa.gov



NOAA FISHERIES

Overview

- Background
- Geographic Scope of Plan
- Regulatory elements
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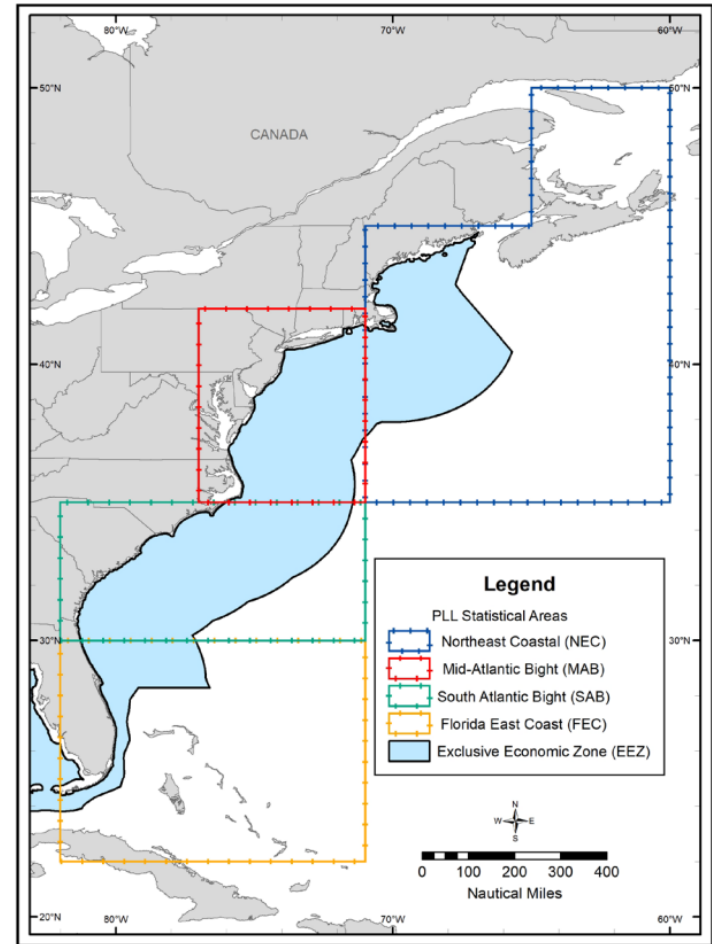
Background

- The PLTRP is required under Section 118 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act to reduce serious injury and mortality (bycatch) of short-finned pilot whales in the U.S. East Coast Atlantic pelagic longline fishery.
- The PLTRP includes regulatory and non-regulatory management measures.
- The regulations implementing the PLTRP were first published on May 19, 2009 (74 FR 23349)
- The PLTRP was amended on June 6, 2023 (88 FR 36965) based on consensus recommendations made by the Pelagic Longline Take Reduction Team.

Geographic Scope

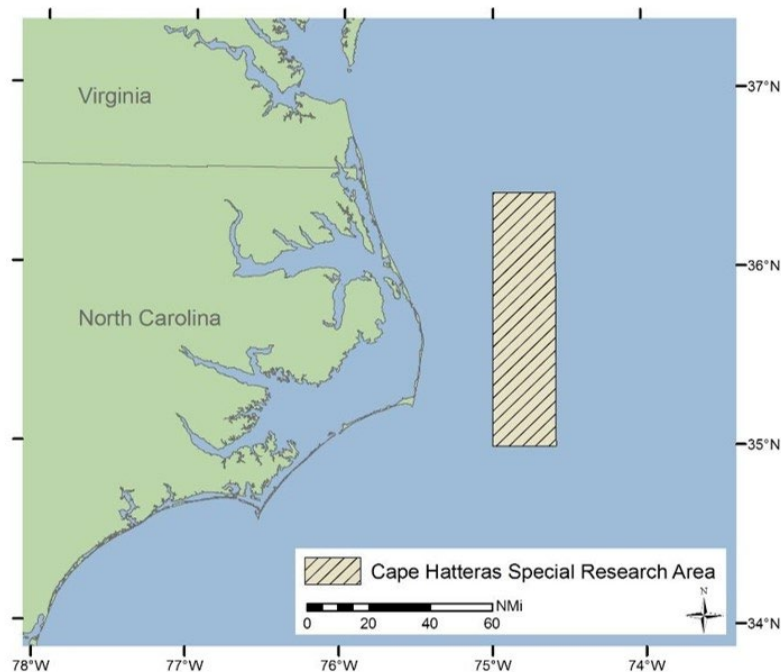
- The geographic scope of PLTRP requirements is the U.S. Atlantic EEZ

(the State/Federal water boundary seaward to 200 nautical miles and east of the line of demarcation between the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico as defined in 50 CFR 600.105(c))



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Note that the Amended PLTRP removed the Cape Hatteras Special Research Area, along with its special observer and research participation requirements for fishermen operating in that area.



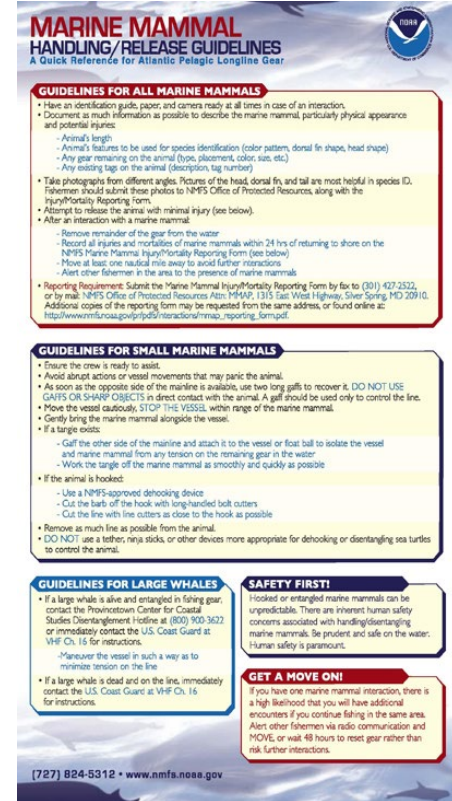
Regulatory Requirements in Amended PLTRP



Marine Mammal Handling and Release Placard –

effective June 18, 2009

- This is an existing requirement from the original PLTRP
- All affected pelagic longline vessels in the U.S. Atlantic EEZ are required to post the "Marine Mammal Handling/Release Guidelines: A Quick Reference for Atlantic Pelagic Longline Gear" inside the wheelhouse and on the working deck.



MARINE MAMMAL HANDLING/RELEASE GUIDELINES
A Quick Reference for Atlantic Pelagic Longline Gear

GUIDELINES FOR ALL MARINE MAMMALS

- Have an identification guide, paper, and camera ready at all times in case of an interaction.
- Document as much information as possible to describe the marine mammal, particularly physical appearance and potential injuries:
 - Animal's length
 - Animal's features to be used for species identification (color pattern, dorsal fin shape, head shape)
 - Any gear remaining on the animal (type, placement, color, size, etc.)
 - Any existing tag on the animal (description, tag number)
- Take photographs from different angles. Pictures of the head, dorsal fin, and tail are most helpful in species ID. Fishermen should submit these photos to NMFS Office of Protected Resources, along with the Injury/Mortality Reporting Form.
- Attempt to release the animal with minimal injury (see below).
- After an interaction with a marine mammal:
 - Remove remainder of the gear from the water
 - Record all injuries and mortalities of marine mammals within 24 hrs of returning to shore on the NMFS Marine Mammal Injury/Mortality Reporting Form (see below)
 - Move at least one nautical mile away to avoid further interactions
 - Alert other fishermen in the area to the presence of marine mammals
- Reporting Requirement: Submit the Marine Mammal Injury/Mortality Reporting Form by fax to (301) 427-2522, or by mail: NMFS Office of Protected Resources Attn: MPMAP, 1315 East West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Additional copies of the reporting form may be requested from the same address, or found online at: http://www.mfsc.noaa.gov/jpr/pdf/interactions/mmaa_reporting_form.pdf

GUIDELINES FOR SMALL MARINE MAMMALS

- Ensure the crew is ready to assist.
- Avoid abrupt actions or vessel movements that may panic the animal.
- As soon as the opposite side of the mainline is available, use two long gaffs to recover it. DO NOT USE GAFFS OR SHARP OBJECTS in direct contact with the animal. A gaff should be used only to control the line.
- Move the vessel cautiously *DOWN THE VESSEL*, within range of the marine mammal.
- Gently berth the marine mammal alongside the vessel.
- If a target exists:
 - Gaff the other side of the mainline and attach it to the vessel or float ball to isolate the vessel and marine mammal from any tension on the remaining gear in the water
 - Work the target off the marine mammal as smoothly and quickly as possible
- If the animal is hooked:
 - Use a NMFS-approved dehooking device
 - Cut the barb off the hook with long-handled bolt cutters
 - Cut the line with line cutters as close to the hook as possible
- Remove as much line as possible from the animal.
- DO NOT use a becher, net/sicks, or other devices more appropriate for dehooking or disentangling sea turtles to control the animal.

GUIDELINES FOR LARGE WHALES

- If a large whale is alive and entangled in fishing gear, contact the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies Disentanglement Hotline at (800) 900-3622 or immediately contact the U.S. Coast Guard at VHF Ch. 16 for instructions.
 - Maneuver the vessel in such a way as to minimize tension on the line
- If a large whale is dead and on the line, immediately contact the U.S. Coast Guard at VHF Ch. 16 for instructions.

SAFETY FIRST!

Hooked or entangled marine mammals can be unpredictable. There are inherent human safety concerns associated with handling/disentangling marine mammals. Be prudent and safe on the water. Human safety is paramount.

GET A MOVE ON!

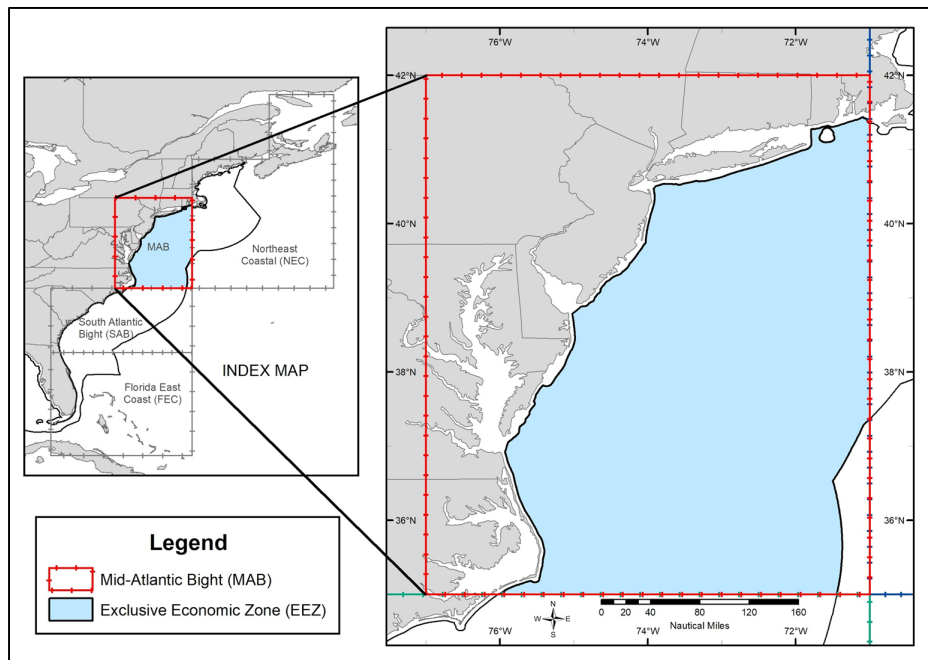
If you have one marine mammal interaction, there is a high likelihood that you will have additional encounters if you continue fishing in the same area. Alert other fishermen via radio communication and MOVE or wait 48 hours to reset gear rather than risk further interactions.

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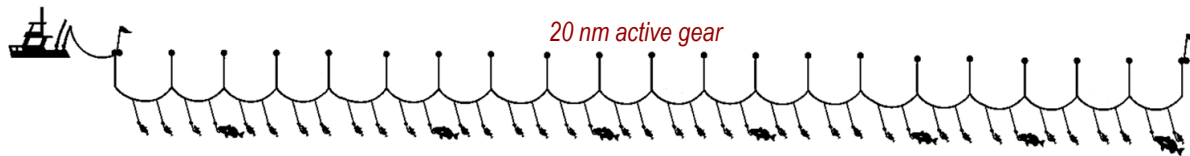
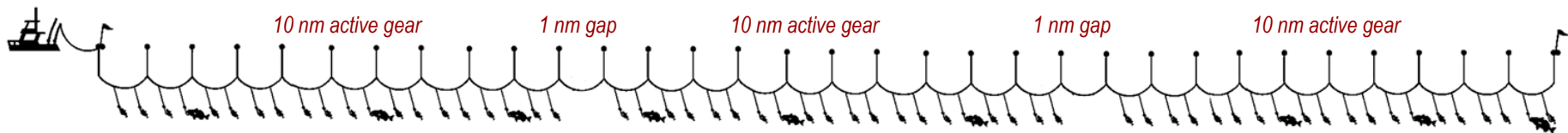
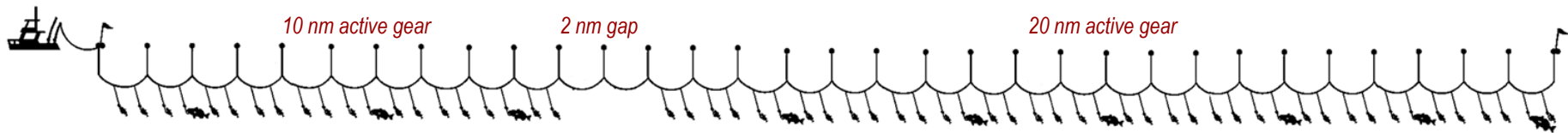
Mainline length restriction for MAB – *effective July 6, 2023*

Modified the original PLTRP mainline length restrictions so that vessels in the EEZ portion of the Mid-Atlantic Bight may:

- Set no more than one mainline in the water at any one time.
 - If the gear breaks or parts after setting, the vessel owner or operator must make every effort to remove the additional portions of the gear as soon as possible.
- Mainline cannot exceed 32 nm in length, subject to the following specifications:
 - There may be no more than 30 nm total of active gear (gear with gangions or hooks attached) deployed along the mainline.
 - A single section of active gear may not exceed 20 nm
 - If more than one section of active gear along the mainline are deployed, each section of active gear must be separated by a gap of at least 1nm with no active gear (no gangions or hooks attached).



Mainline length examples



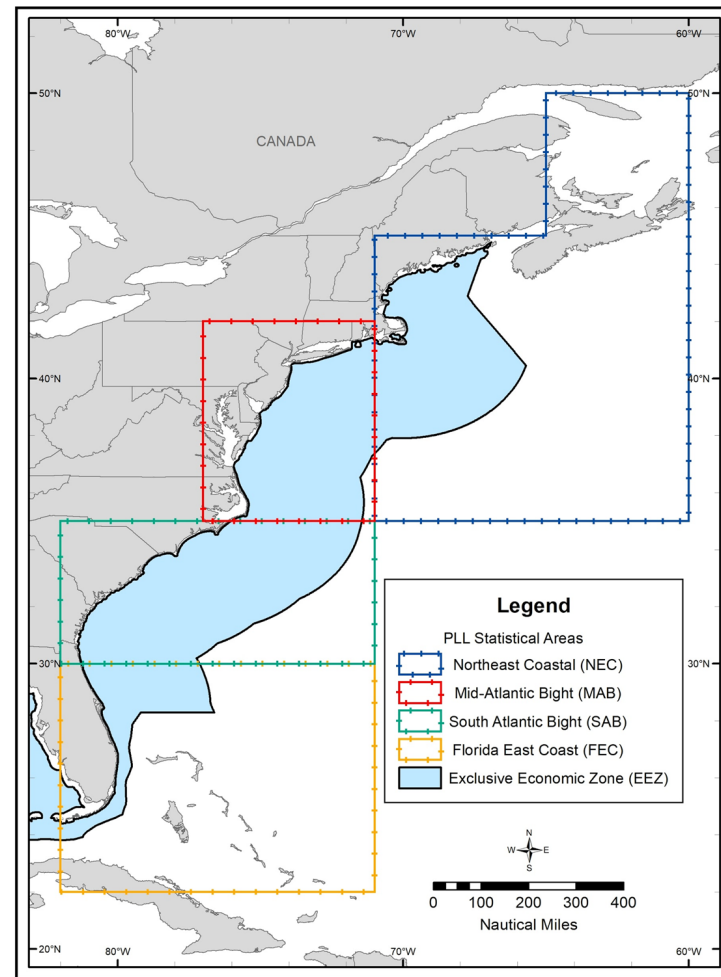
Terminal gear – *effective July 8, 2024*

Vessels operating in the U.S. Atlantic EEZ can only possess, use, and deploy hooks and gangions that meet the following specifications:






- **Hooks:** The hook shank must be constructed of corrodible round wire stock and meet the following specifications:
 1. 16/0 circle hook must have a round wire diameter not to exceed 4.05mm and must straighten with a force not to exceed 300 lb., based on manufacturer specifications when new
 2. 18/0 circle hook must have a round wire diameter not to exceed 4.40mm and must straighten with a force not to exceed 300 lb., based on manufacturer specifications when new

- **Gangions:** Any gangion must meet all of the following specifications:
 1. Made of monofilament nylon. No other line material, such as wire, may be used. Crimps and chafing gear are allowed.
 2. Have a diameter of 1.8 mm or larger
 3. Have a breaking strength of at least 300 lb., based on manufacturer specifications when new

*Note that there is an exception to these regulations for transit



Summary of PLTRP Regulatory Requirements by Geographic Area

Requirement	Effective Date	Mid-Atlantic Bight (EEZ)	U.S. Atlantic EEZ
Marine mammal handling and release placard (50 CFR 229.36(c))	June 18, 2009		
Mainline length restriction (50 CFR 229.36(e))	July 6, 2023		
Hook and gangion (terminal gear) requirements (50 CFR 229.36(d))	July 8, 2024		

Non-Regulatory Elements

There are four non-regulatory measures in the amended PLTRP. NOAA Fisheries is responsible for implementing three of these measures, within the constraints of available funding. These include:

1. **Increase observer coverage:** NOAA Fisheries will increase observer coverage to 12-15% throughout all Atlantic PLL fisheries that interact with short-finned pilot whales, with priority given to the Mid-Atlantic Bight.
2. **Convene a safe handling and release work group** to update protocols for marine mammal interactions in the Atlantic PLL fishery
3. **Update observer protocols and fishery observer data forms** to increase information collected from marine mammal interaction and depredation events in the Atlantic PLL fishery
4. **Captains communications:** Vessel operators throughout the Atlantic pelagic longline fishery are strongly encouraged to maintain daily communications with other local vessel captains regarding protected species interactions, with the goal of identifying and exchanging information relevant to avoiding protected species bycatch. For this to be effective, the exchange of information must be timely, involve cooperation, and intended to result in an action being taken to either avoid or reduce bycatch (e.g., Captains can share information about locations of protected species to avoid, as well as share best practices for safe handling and release). *This measure relies on the fishing industry.*



Thank you!



For more information on the PLTRP:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/marine-mammal-protection/pelagic-longline-take-reduction-plan>

