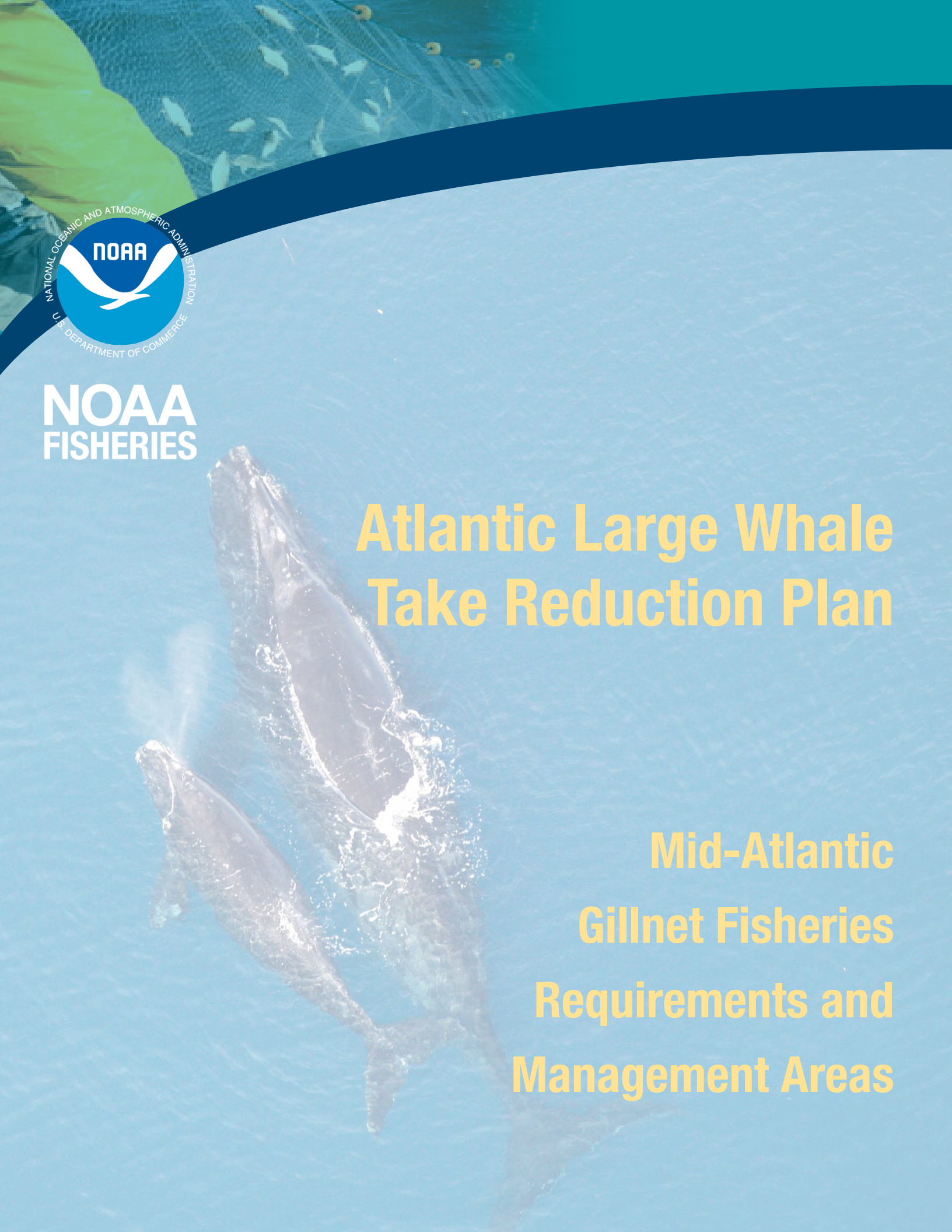

NOAA FISHERIES

Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan

Mid-Atlantic Gillnet Fisheries Requirements and Management Areas

Contact Us For More Information

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www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/whaletrp/

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NOAA FISHERIES

The Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan applies to the following fisheries:

Gillnets

- Northeast sink gillnet;
- Northeast anchored float gillnet;
- Northeast drift gillnet;
- Mid-Atlantic gillnet;
- Southeastern US Atlantic shark gillnet; and
- Southeast Atlantic gillnet.

Trap/Pots

- Northeast/Mid-Atlantic American lobster trap/pot;
- Atlantic blue crab trap/pot;
- Atlantic mixed species trap/pot which includes, but is not limited to: crab (red, Jonah, and rock), hagfish, fin-fish (black sea bass, scup, tautog, cod, haddock, pollock, redfish (ocean perch), and white hake), conch/whelk, and shrimp.

The Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan

The Atlantic Large whale Take Reduction Plan (Plan) is a program to reduce the risk of serious injury and death of large whales caused by accidental entanglement in U.S. commercial trap/pot and gillnet fishing gear. The Plan is required by the Marine Mammal Protection Act and has been developed by NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

The Plan focuses on reducing entanglements of endangered right, humpback, and fin whales. Non-endangered minke whales also benefit from the Plan. Under the Endangered Species Act, Federal agencies are required to ensure that permitted activities (such as fishing) do not cause harm to, or jeopardize, the continued existence of any endangered species. Since the Plan measures are intended to reduce entanglements of right, humpback, and fin whales in fishing gear, these measures also help to avoid the likelihood that Federally permitted fishing activities will jeopardize the continued existence of these whales.

The Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team; which consists of fishing industry representatives, environmentalists, state and federal officials, and other interested parties; helped develop the Plan. Information about the process and the team is available on the Plan: website www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/whaletrp/

The Plan evolves and changes as NMFS and the team learn more about whale entanglements and how fishing practices might be modified to reduce the risk of entanglement. The first Plan went into effect in 1997. The regulations contained in that rule have been updated several times, with the most recent updates occuring in the summer of 2014 (see page 6 for a summary of the most recent Mid-Atlantic gillnet updates).

The current Plan includes restrictions on where and how gear can be set, including closures and gear modifications such as use of sinking groundline and weak links, trap minimums, and gear markings. Other components of the Plan include research on whale populations, whale behavior, and fishing gear interactions; outreach to inform and collaborate with fishermen; and a disentanglement program.

This document is a summary of the Plan's commercial **Mid-Atlantic gillnet fishing regulations**.

Note: This guide includes Federal requirements only for state and Federal waters; contact your state fishery office for any additional requirements within state waters. Should any regulations overlap with the Plan regulations, the more restrictive regulations apply.

2014 Mid-Atlantic Gillnet Management Changes

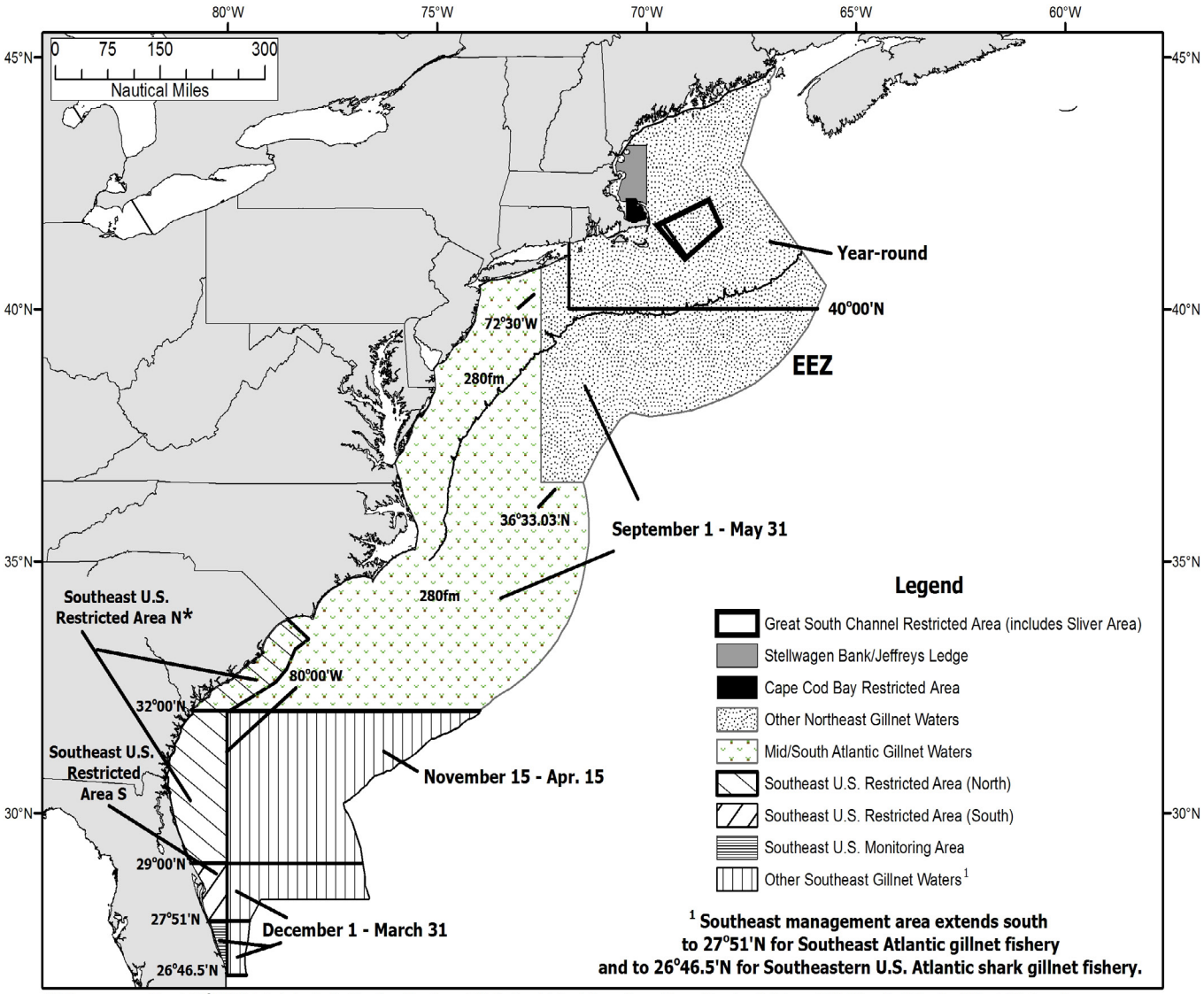
In 2014, the Plan was modified to include the following new requirements and definitions:. Modifications for Northeast and Southeast fisheries can be found in the corresponding guides:

Gear Markings

Gear marking colors remain the same and are defined under each individual management area, however the frequency and size of the markings have changed. Now all buoy lines must be marked with three 12 inch (30.48 cm), colored marks: one at the top of the buoy line, one midway along the buoy line, and one at the bottom of the buoy line.

Gillnet Management Area Summary

Gillnet gear requirements vary by geographic area. The Plan currently recognizes seven gillnet areas: Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area, Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area, Great South Channel Sliver Restricted Gillnet Area, Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area, Other Northeast Gillnet Waters, Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters, Southeast U.S. Restricted Area South, Southeast U.S. Monitoring Area, and Other Southeast Gillnet Waters.



* The area north of 32°00' N lat. is included in the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area from Nov. 15 - April 15, and Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters from Sept. 1 - Nov. 14 and April 16 - May 31.

Mid-Atlantic Gillnet Requirements

Gillnet Universal Requirements

- No buoy line floating at the surface.
- No wet storage of gear (all gear must be hauled out of the water at least once every 30 days).
- Fishermen are encouraged, but not required, to maintain knot-free buoy lines.
- All groundlines must be made of sinking line.

Gillnet Gear Marking Requirements

- Gillnet surface buoys to be marked to identify the vessel or fishery with one of the following: the owner's motorboat registration number and/or U.S. vessel documentation number; the federal commercial fishing permit number; or whatever positive identification marking is required by the vessel's home-port state.
- When marking is not already required by state or federal regulations, the letters and numbers to mark gear must be at least 1 inch (2.5cm) in height, block letters or Arabic numbers, in a color that contrasts with the color of the buoy.
- Buoy lines are to be marked with **three 12 inch (30.48 cm), colored marks: one at the top of the buoy line, one midway along the buoy line, and one at the bottom of the buoy line**. Color requirements are defined for each individual management area as described in each management area description that follows.
- See page 10 and Supplement C- Gear Marking for more information on gear marking.

Gillnet Weak Link Requirements

- All buoys, floatation devices and/or weights must be attached to the buoy line with a weak link having a certain breaking strength as defined for each management area in the following tables.
- **For nets which do not return to port with the vessel:** weak links must be incorporated into net panels following one of the two configurations shown on page 9 and have breaking strengths as defined for each management area in the pages that follow.
- **For nets that return to port each day with the vessel:** net panels are required to have a weak link at the center or each floatline or at least every 25 fathoms along the floatline of a panel longer that 50 fathoms. Configuration examples are shown on page 9.
- Individual weak links are not required in locations where rope of appropriate breaking strength is used. Additionally, if no up and down line is present, then weak links are not required at that location. Please see Supplement B- Weak Links and Anchoring Techniques for more information.
- Gillnet panel weak links must be chosen from the list of NMFS approved gear, which includes: off the shelf weak links, rope of appropriate breaking strength, hog rings, and other materials or devices approved in writing. Please see Supplement B- Weak Links and Anchoring Techniques for more information.
- The weak link placement must meet one of the two configuration options shown on the following page. The same configuration will be required for all gillnet panels in a string.

Anchored Gillnet Anchoring Requirements

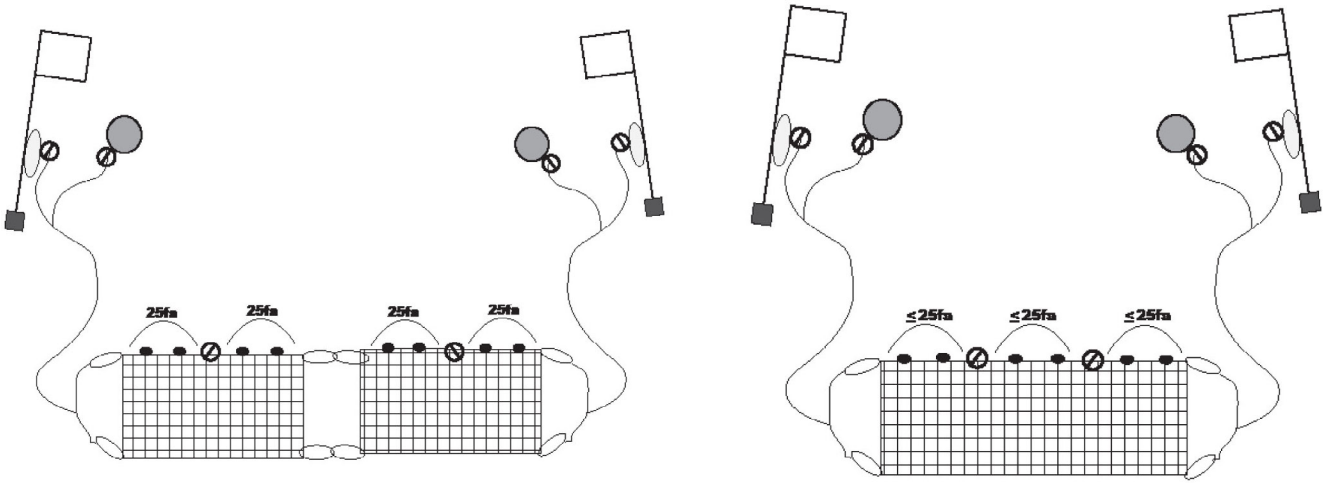
- All gillnets that do not return to port with vessel, regardless of number of net panels, will be required to be anchored with the holding power of at least a 22-lb Danforth-style anchor at each end of the net string (must be a burying anchor; no dead weights).

Drift Gillnet Night Fishing & Storage Restrictions

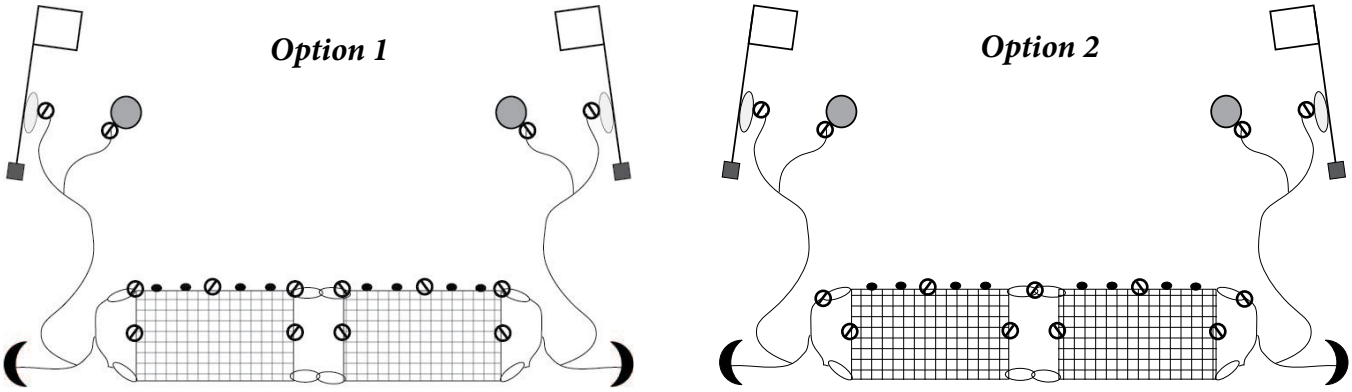
- Fishing with drift gillnet gear at night (i.e., anytime between one-half hour before sunset and one-half hour after sunrise) is prohibited unless the gear is tended (i.e., attached to the vessel).
- All drift gillnet gear must be removed from the water and stowed on board before a vessel returns to port.

Gillnet Panel Configuration Options

For gillnets that do return to port with the vessel



For gillnets that <u>do not</u> return to port with the vessel:



Option 1

<u>For all variations in panel size:</u>

- One weak link must be placed in the center of each of the up and down lines at both ends of the net panel; and
- One weak link must be placed as close as possible to each end of the net panels on the floatline.

<u>For net panels 50 fathoms or less in length:</u>

- One weak link must be placed in the center of the floatline.

<u>For net panels greater than 50 fathoms:</u>

- One weak link must be placed at least every 25 fathoms along the float line.

Option 2:

<u>For all variations in panel size:</u>

- One weak link must be placed in the center of each of the up and down lines at both ends of the net panel; and
- One weak link must be placed between floatline tie-loops between net panels; and
- One weak link must be placed where the floatline tie-loops attach to the bridle, buoy line, or ground-line at each end of a net string.

<u>For net panels 50 fathoms or less in length:</u>

- One weak link must be placed in the center of the floatline.

<u>For net panels greater than 50 fathoms:</u>

- One weak link must be placed at least every 25 fathoms along the floatline.

<u>NOTE</u>: *Individual weak links are not required in locations where rope of appropriate breaking strength is used. Additionally, if no up and down line is present, then weak links are not required at that location. This graphic depicts a general anchored gillnet gear configuration, which may vary. Also, only the buoy line, groundline, anchor, and weak link configuration are displayed here; please see individual management areas for information regarding gear marking and other requirements.*

Gillnet Gear Marking

Surface Buoy Marking:

Markings on gillnet surface buoys need to identify the associated vessel or fishery with one of the following:

- The owner's motorboat registration number and/or U.S. vessel documentation number;
- The federal commercial fishing permit number; or
- Whatever positive identification marking is required by the vessel's home-port state.

When marking is not already required by state or federal regulations, the letters and numbers to mark gear must be at least 1 inch (2.5 cm) in height, block letters or Arabic numbers, in a color that contrasts with the color of the buoy.

Buoy Line Marking:

All buoy lines must be marked with three 12 inch (30.48 cm), colored marks: one at the top of the buoy line, one midway along the buoy line, and one at the bottom of the buoy line. Each color code must be permanently affixed on or along the line and each color code must be clearly visible when the gear is hauled or removed from the water.

Note: If the color of the rope is the same as or similar to a color code listed above, a white mark may be substituted for that color code.

Gear Marking Color	Applicable Management Area
GREEN	• Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area • Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area • Great South Channel Sliver Restricted Gillnet Area • Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area • Other Northeast Gillnet Waters (Northeast & Mid-Atlantic)
BLUE	• Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters
YELLOW	Excluding Shark Gillnet: • Southeast US Restricted Area South • Other Southeast Gillnet Waters
GREEN & BLUE	Shark Gillnet (with webbing of 5" or greater) • Southeast US Monitoring Area • Southeast US Restricted Area South • Other Southeast Gillnet Waters

Additional information on gear marking techniques can be found in Supplement C- Gear Marking.

Mid-Atlantic Gillnet Management Areas

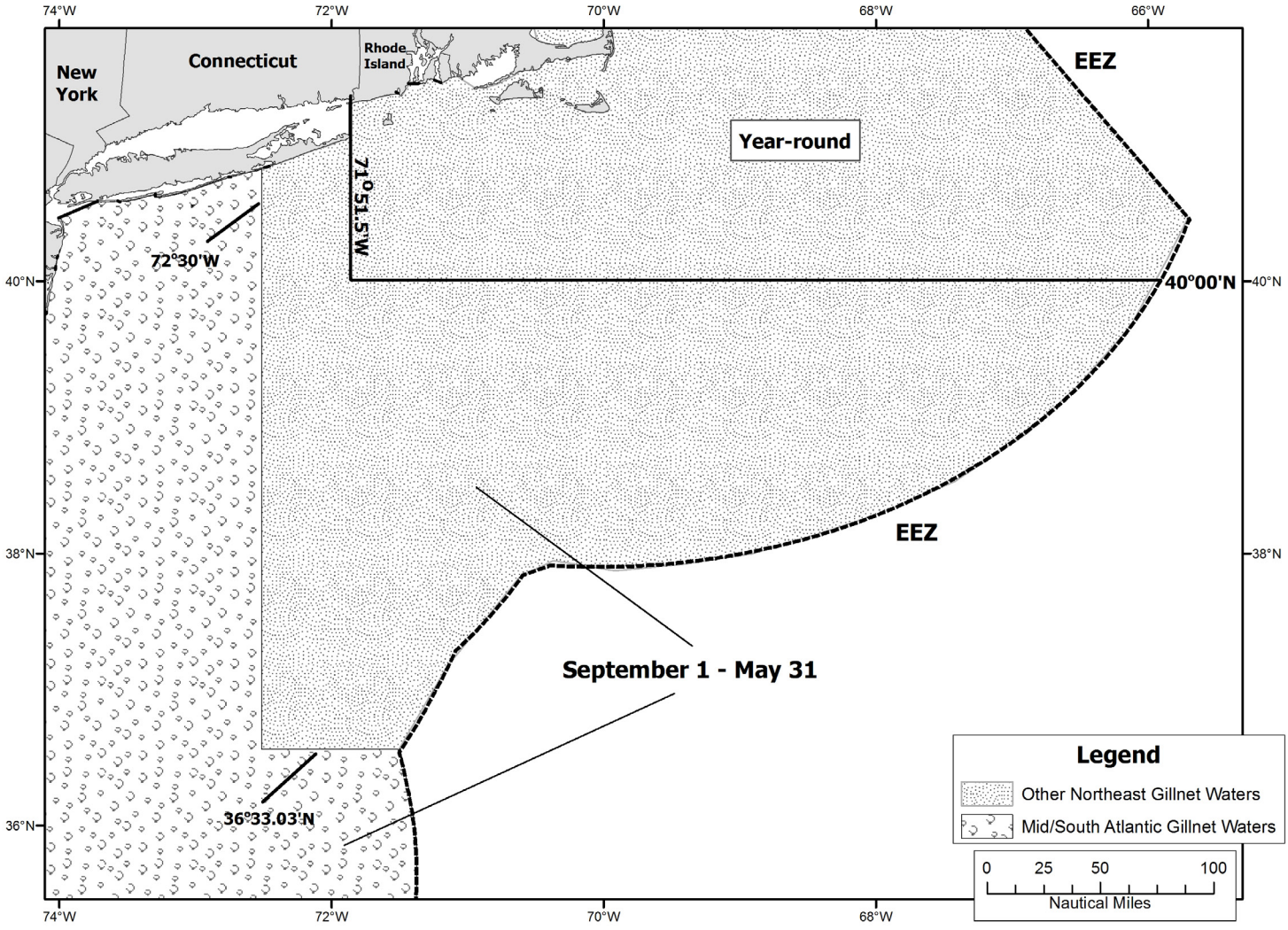
- **Other Northeast Gillnet Waters (Mid-Atlantic) 12**
- **Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters 14**

Mid-Atlantic Gillnet Management Areas
Other Northeast Gillnet Waters (Mid-Atlantic)

LOCATION DESCRIPTION
Other Northeast Gillnet Waters consists of all U.S. waters from the U.S./Canada border to Long Island, NY, at 72°30' W. long. south to 36°33.03' N. lat., and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, with the exception of the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area, Stellwagen Bank/Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area, Great South Channel Restricted Area and the exempted waters listed in Supplement A- Exempted Areas.

DATES	GILLNET TYPE	RESTRICTIONS/REQUIREMENTS SUMMARY
Sept. 1- May 31	• Anchored	• Universal requirements • Weak links- breaking strength of no greater than 1,100 lb. • Anchoring requirements • Sinking groundlines • Gear marking- **GREEN**
	• Drift	• Gear marking- **GREEN** • Night fishing & storage restrictions

Mid-Atlantic Gillnet Management Areas
Other Northeast Gillnet Waters (Mid-Atlantic)

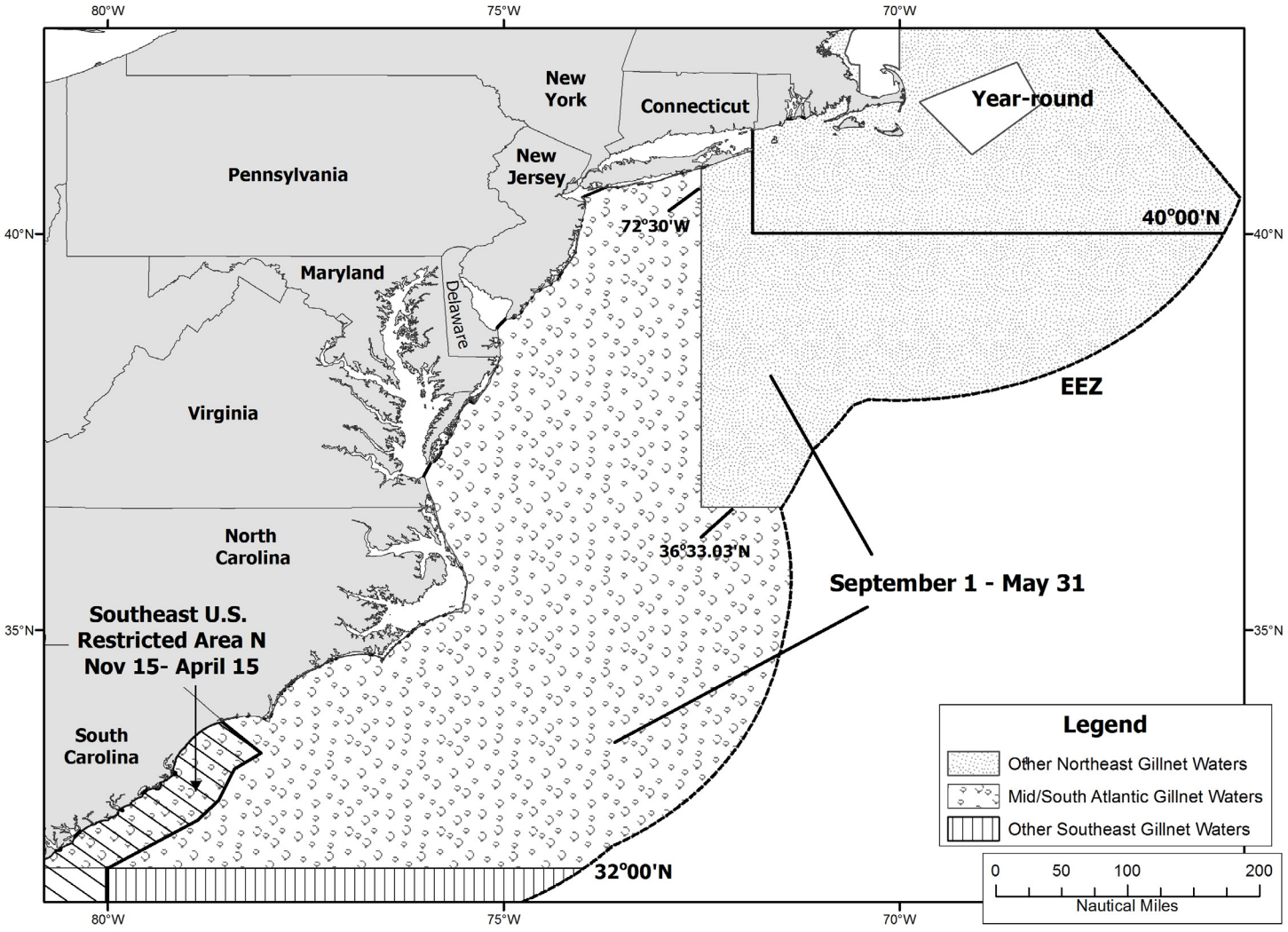


Mid-Atlantic Gillnet Management Areas
Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters

LOCATION DESCRIPTION
Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters consists of all U.S. waters bounded on the north from 72°30' W. long. south to 36°33.03' N. lat., and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ, and bounded on the south by 32°00' N. lat, and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ. From November 15-April 15, waters within 35nm of the SC shoreline are part of the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area North (Little River Inlet, SC, is not included in this area). Please refer to the Southeast Gillnet Guide for more information on the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area North.

DATES	GILLNET TYPE	RESTRICTIONS/REQUIREMENTS SUMMARY
Sept. 1- May 31	• Anchored	• Universal Requirements • Sinking Groundlines • Gear Marking- **BLUE** • Weak Link & Anchoring* Requirements- Breaking strength of no greater than 1,100 lb. Configurations differ for gillnets returning to port and those that do not. See page 9 for more details. • Gillnets set within 300 yards (900ft) of the shoreline in NC, that do not return to port with the vessel, will also have an optional gillnet configuration: net panels configured with 5 or more weak links per net panel, depending on panel length, with a breaking strength no greater than 600 lb, and be anchored with the holding power of at least an 8-lb Danforth-style anchor on the offshore end of the string and a 31-lb dead weight on the inshore end of the string. The entire string must be set within 300 yards (900ft) of the shoreline.
	• Drift	• Gear marking- **GREEN** • Night fishing & storage restrictions

Mid-Atlantic Gillnet Management Areas
Mid/South Atlantic Gillnet Waters



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August 2014

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