NOAA FISHERIES

Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan

Mid-Atlantic Trap/Pot Fisheries Requirements and Management Areas

ATTENTION

As of January 2015, NOAA is considering recommendations made by the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team.

Please check with your local NOAA Fisheries gear liaison to make sure current guide recommendations are still in effect.

Contact Us For More Information

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www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/whaletrp

CONTENTS

Overview 4

2014 Mid-Atlantic Trap/Pot Management Changes 6

Mid-Atlantic Trap/Pot Management Area Summary 7

Trap/Pot Gear Requirements 8

- Universal Requirements 8
- Gear Marking 10

Individual Management Area Requirements 11

- Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters (Mid-Atlantic) 12
- Offshore Trap/Pot Waters (Mid-Atlantic) 14

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 trap/pot 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 trap/pot 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 Trap/Pot Management Changes

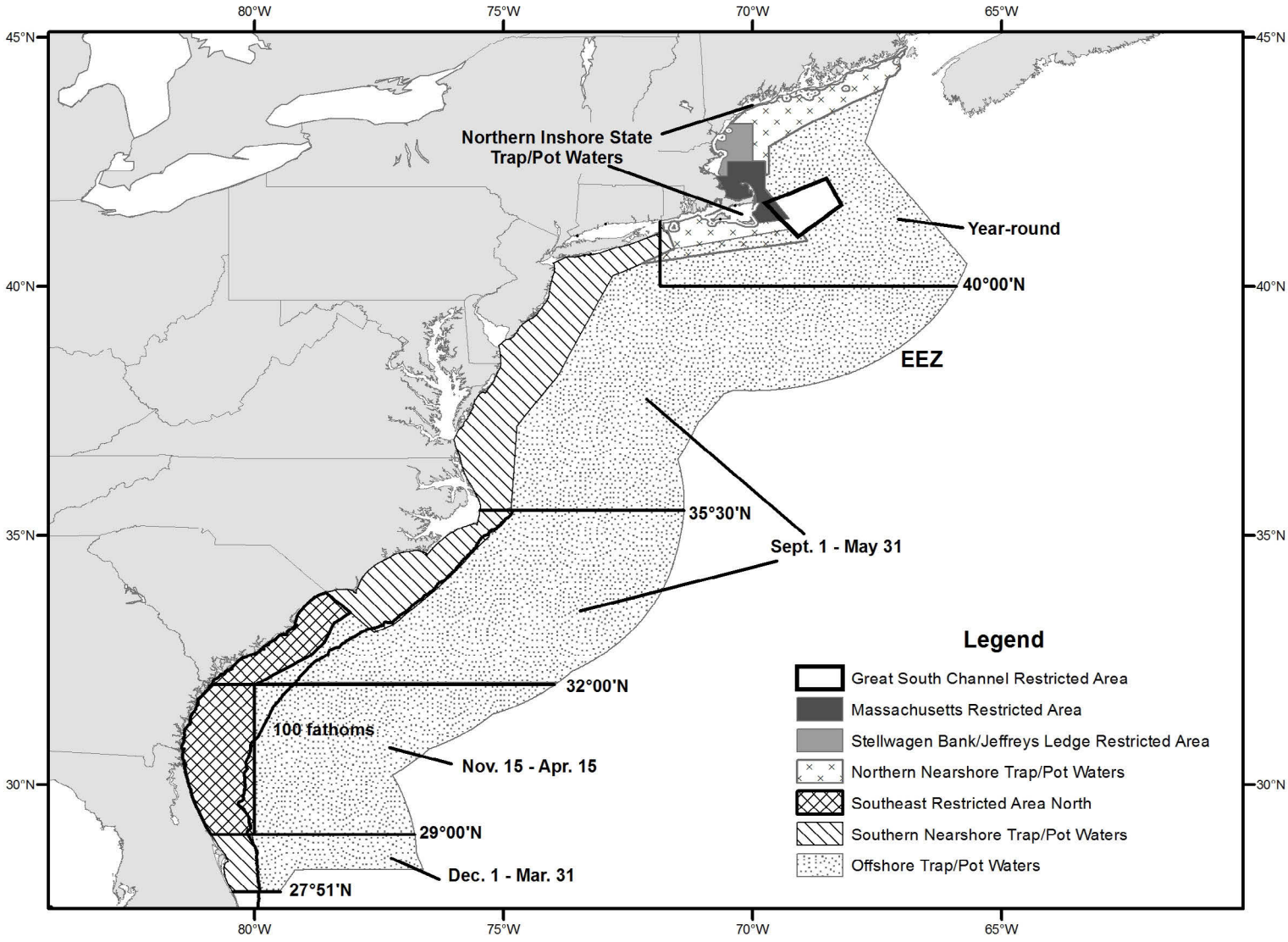
In 2014, the Plan was modified to include the following new requirements for Mid-Atlantic trap/pot fsheries. Modifications for Northeast and Southeast fisheries can be found in the corresponding guides:

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.

Trap/Pot Management Area Summary

Trap/pot gear requirements vary by geographic area. The Plan currently recognizes eight trap/pot areas along the entire Atlantic coast: Massachusetts Restricted Area, Great South Channel Restricted Area, Stellwagen Bank/ Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area, Northern Inshore State Trap/Pot Waters, Northern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters, Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters, Offshore Trap/Pot Waters, and the Southeast Restricted Area North.



Many of these areas overlap the Lobster Management Areas (LMA) described in the Federal American lobster regulations found at 50 CFR Part 697 Subpart B.

Trap/Pot Requirements

Trap/Pot 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.

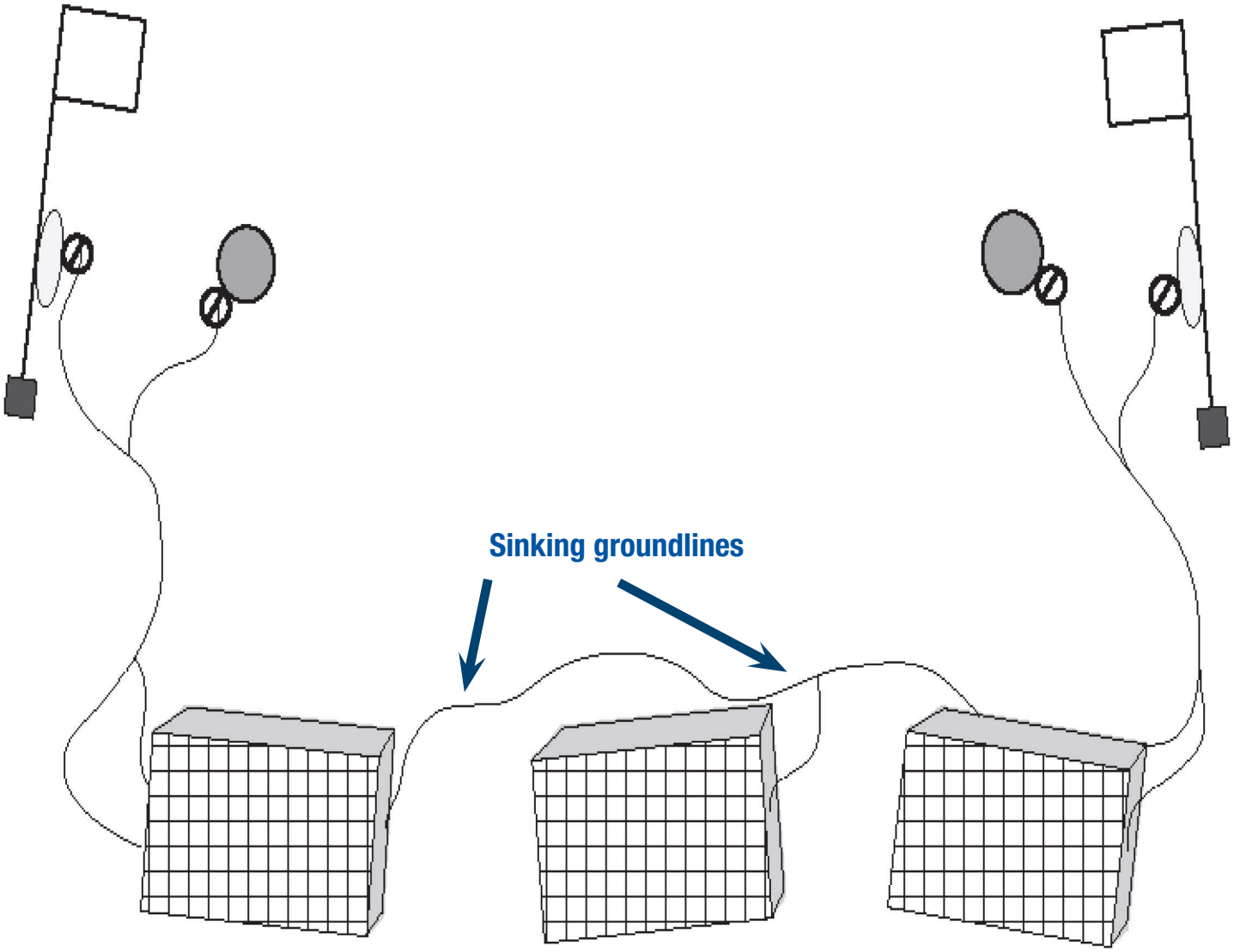
Trap/Pot Weak Link Requirements

- All buoys, flotation 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 on the following pages.
- 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. Weak links must be designed in such a way that the bitter end of the buoy line is clean and free of any knots when the weak link breaks.
- See Supplement B- Weak Links and Anchoring Techniques for more details on appropriate weak links strengths.

Trap/Pot Gear Marking Requirements

- Trap/pot 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 (2.5 cm) 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.

Trap/Pot Diagram



Buoy line weak link- please refer to individual management areas for specific breaking strength requirements

Buoy

High flyer or buoy

Note: This graphic depicts a general trap/pot gear configuration. Please see individual Management Areas for information regarding specific weak link, gear marking and/or any other requirements.

Trap/Pot Gear Marking

Surface Buoy Marking:

Markings on trap/pot 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:

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**. 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.

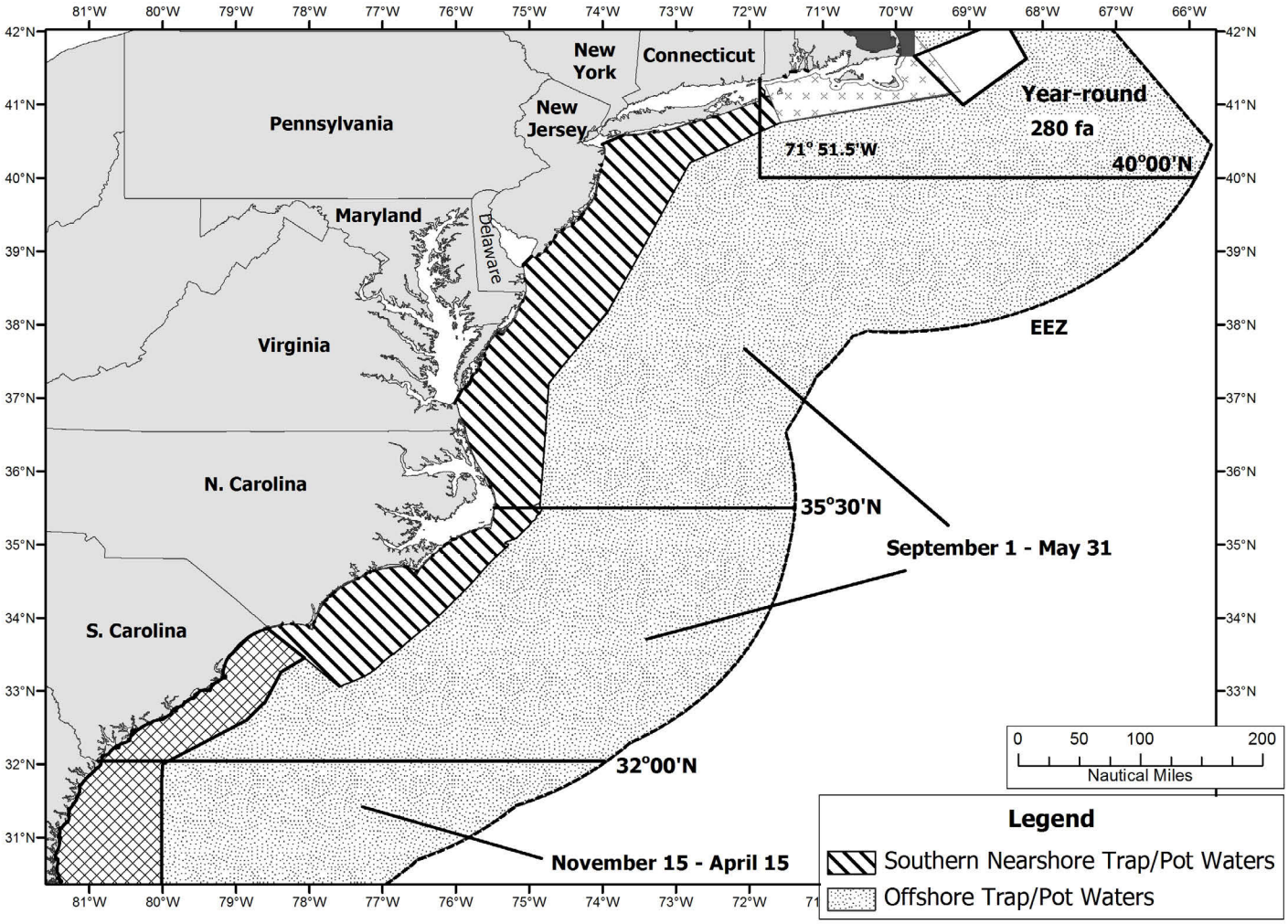
Note: If the color of the rope is the same as or similar to a color code listed above, a white mark may be substituted for that color code.

Gear Marking Color	Applicable Trap/Pot Management Area
RED	• Massachusetts Restricted Area • Northern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters • Northern Inshore State Trap/Pot Waters • Stellwagen Bank Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area • Great South Channel Restricted Area overlapping Lobster Management Area (LMA) 2 and/or the Outer Cape (OC) LMA.
ORANGE:	• Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters.
BLACK	• Offshore Trap/Pot Waters; Great South Channel Restricted Area overlapping with the LMA 2/3 Overlap and/or LMA 3
BLUE & ORANGE	• Southeast Restricted Area North- state waters
GREEN & ORANGE	• Southeast Restricted Area North- Federal waters

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

Mid Atlantic Trap/Pot Management Areas

- **Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters (Mid-Atlantic)**
- **Offshore Trap/Pot Waters (Mid-Atlantic)**



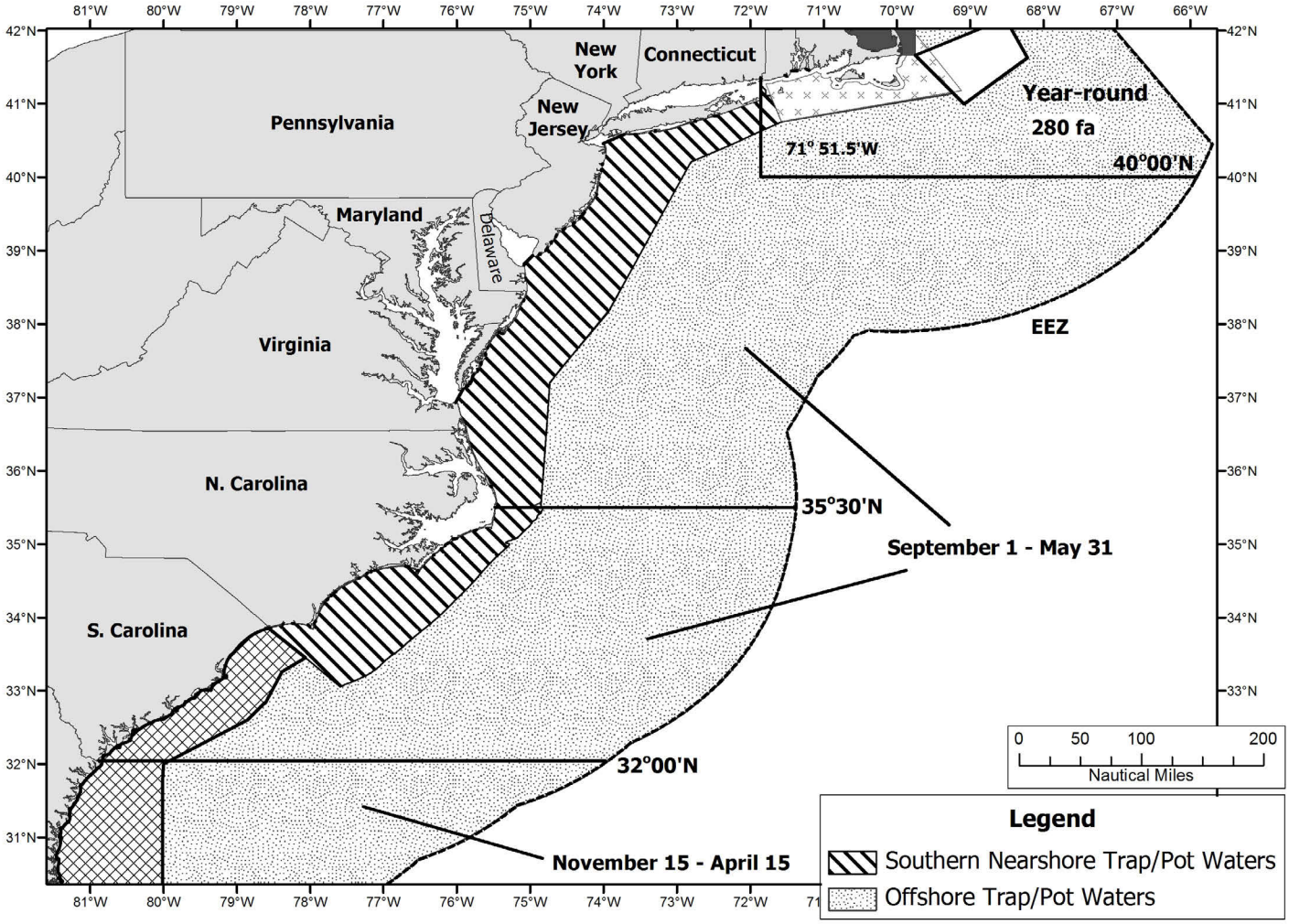
Mid-Atlantic Trap/Pot Management Areas
Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters

MANAGEMENT AREA DESCRIPTION
Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters includes all state and Federal waters which fall within EEZ Nearshore Management Area 4, EEZ Nearshore Management Area 5, and EEZ Nearshore Management Area 6 (as defined in the American Lobster Fishery regulations in 50 CFR 697.18), and inside the 100fa contour line from 35°30' N. lat. south to 27°51' N. lat. and extending inshore to the shoreline or exemption line, with the exception of the exempted waters (see Supplement A-Exempted Areas).

DATES	RESTRICTIONS/REQUIREMENTS SUMMARY
Sept. 1- May 31	• Universal requirements • Gear marking- **ORANGE** • Weak links ≤ 600lbs breaking strength • Sinking groundline • Please note- a small portion of these waters includes portions of LMA 6 (near the mouth of Long Island Sound). These waters follow year-round regulations as described in the "Northeast Trap/Pot Fisheries Management Areas."

TRAP RESTRICTIONS	
Area	**Minimum Number of Traps Per Trawl**
LMA 4,5,6	No minimum

Mid-Atlantic Trap/Pot Management Areas
Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters

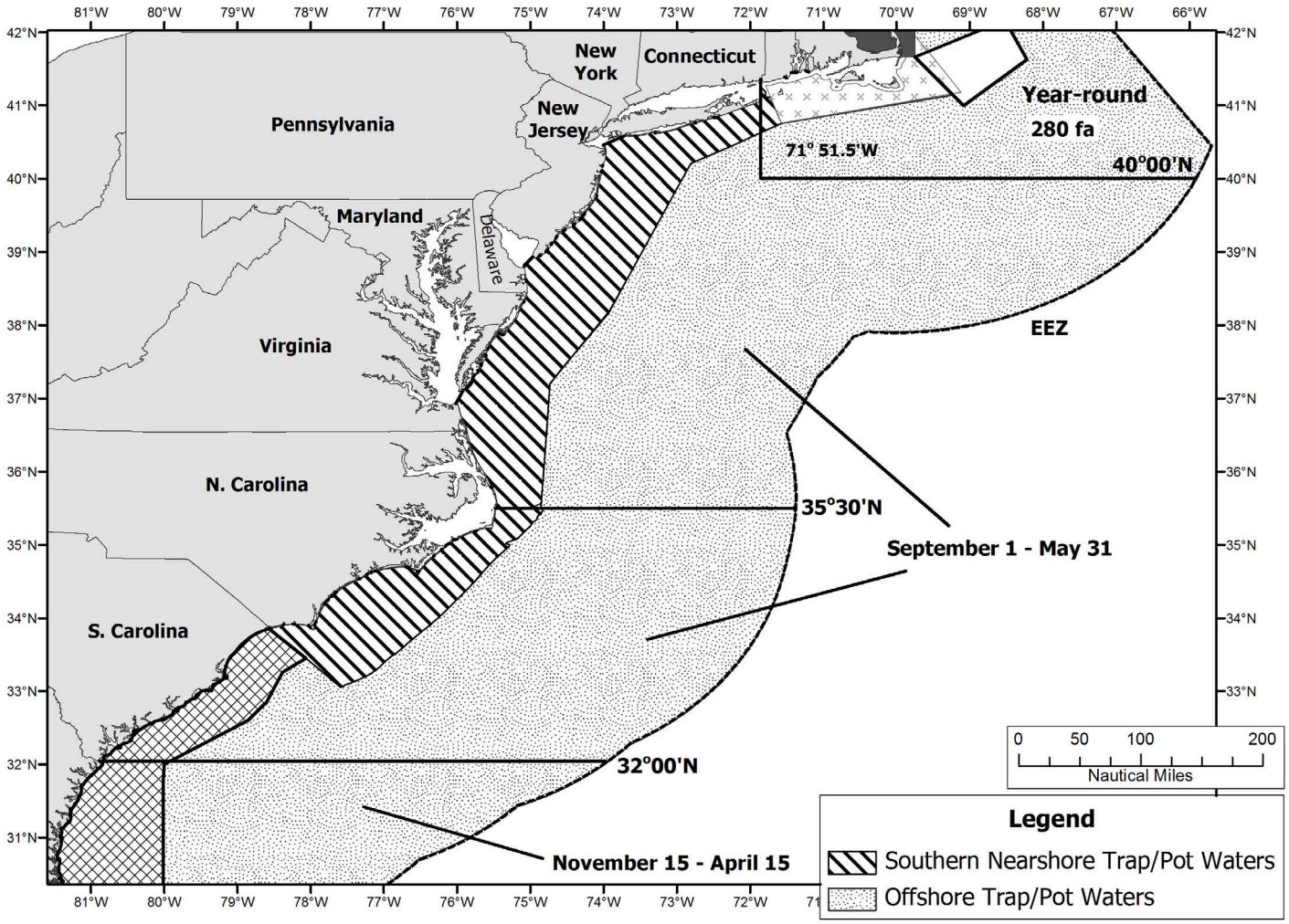


Mid-Atlantic Trap/Pot Management Areas
Offshore Trap/Pot Waters (Mid-Atlantic)

LOCATION DESCRIPTION
Offshore Trap/Pot Waters includes all Federal waters of the EEZ Offshore Management Area 3 (including the areas known as the Area 2/3 Overlap and 3/5 Overlap, as defined in the American Lobster Fishery regulations found at 50 CFR 697.18), with the exception of the Great South Channel Restricted Trap/Pot Area, and extending south along the 100fa contour line from 35°30' N. lat. south to 27°51' N. lat., and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ.

DATES	RESTRICTIONS/REQUIREMENTS SUMMARY
Sept. 1- May 31	• Universal requirements • Gear marking- **BLACK** • Weak links ≤ 1,500 lbs breaking strength and, ≤ 2,000 lbs breaking strength for the red crab trap/pot fishery • Sinking groundlines • No trap restrictions in offshore waters south of 40 degrees

Mid-Atlantic Trap/Pot Management Areas
Offshore Trap/Pot Waters (Mid-Atlantic)



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