

**NOAA  
FISHERIES**

# **Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan**

**Southeast  
Trap/Pot Fisheries  
Requirements and  
Management Areas**

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Reduction Website**

[www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/whaletrp/](http://www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/whaletrp/)

# CONTENTS

**Overview 4**

**2014 Trap/Pot Management Changes Summary 5**

**Southeast Trap/Pot Management Area Overview 8**

**Trap/Pot Gear Requirements 9**

- **Universal Requirements 9**
- **Gear Marking 10**

**Individual Management Area Requirements 11**

- **Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters (Southeast) 12**
- **Offshore Trap/Pot Waters (Southeast) 14**
- **Southeast Restricted Area North 16**



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# 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.nero.noaa.gov/whaletrp/](http://www.nero.noaa.gov/whaletrp/)).

The Plan is an evolving plan that 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 occurring in the summer of 2014 (see page 6 for a summary of the most recent Southeast 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 **Southeast 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.*

## **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, finfish (black sea bass, scup, tautog, cod, haddock, pollock, redfish (ocean perch), and white hake), conch/whelk, and shrimp.

# 2014 Southeast Trap/Pot Management Changes Summary

In 2014, the Plan was modified to include new requirements and definitions. This guide includes modifications required for trap/pot gear that is fished off South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida (i.e. Southeast Trap/Pot gear). Modifications required for trap/pot gear fished off the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast can be found in those corresponding guides. Modifications for Northeast and Mid-Atlantic fisheries can be found in the corresponding guides.:

## New Management Area

A new management area called “Southeast Restricted Area North” has been created for Southeast trap/pot fisheries. New requirements for weak links and vertical line breaking strengths for this area can be found on page 18.

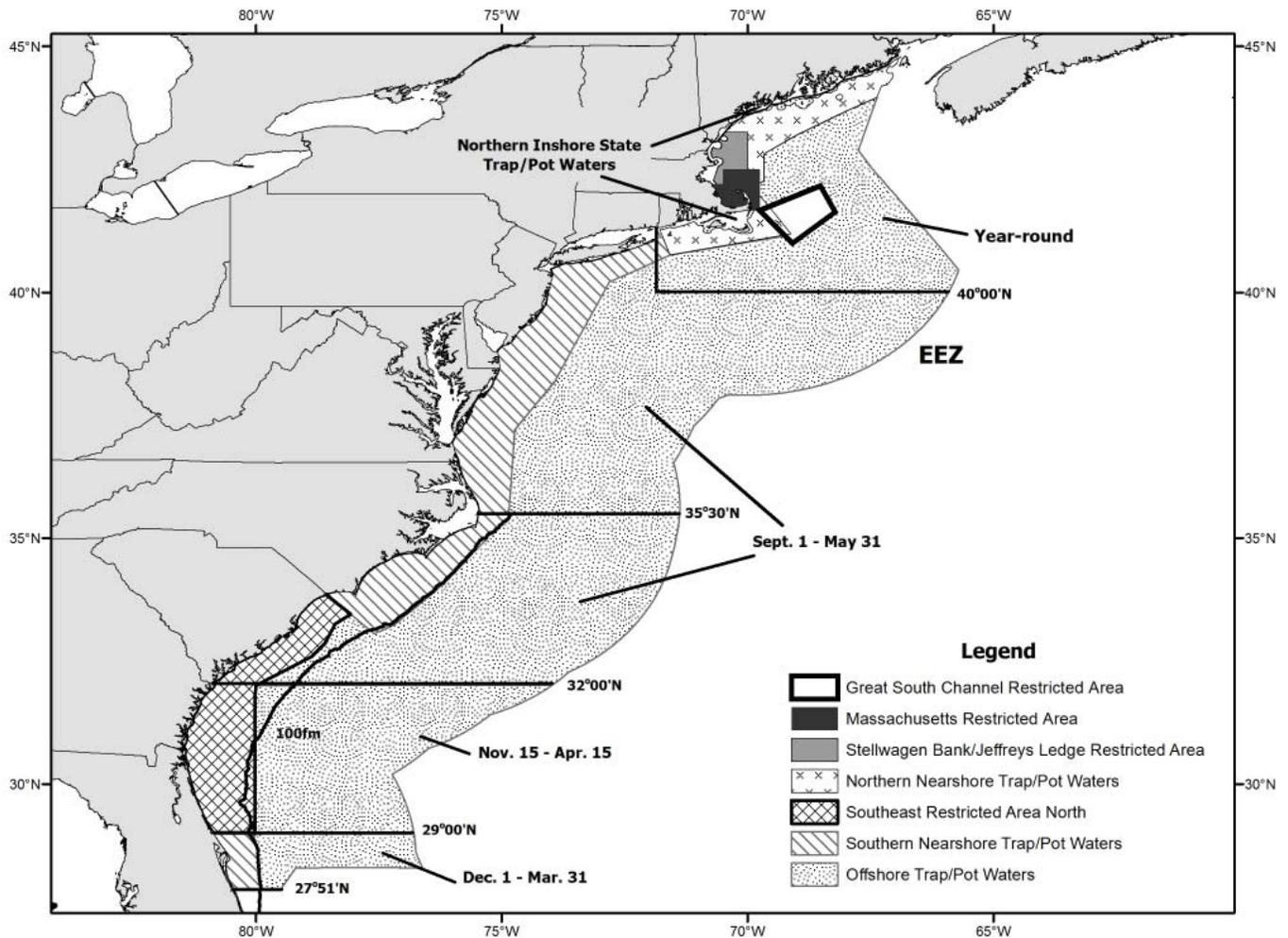
## Gear Markings

Southeast Restricted Area North requires orange and green markings for Federal waters and orange and blue gear markings for state waters. Gear marking colors remain the same as for the Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters (Southeast) and Offshore Trap/Pot Waters (Southeast) management areas. The specific color schemes are defined under each individual management area’s section of this document as well as on page 10.

The frequency and size of the required markings has 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 Overview

The trap/pot gear requirements vary by geographic area. The Plan currently recognizes eight trap/pot areas: 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 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 in the following sections:
- 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 9 and Supplement C- Gear Marking for more information on gear marking.

# 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.



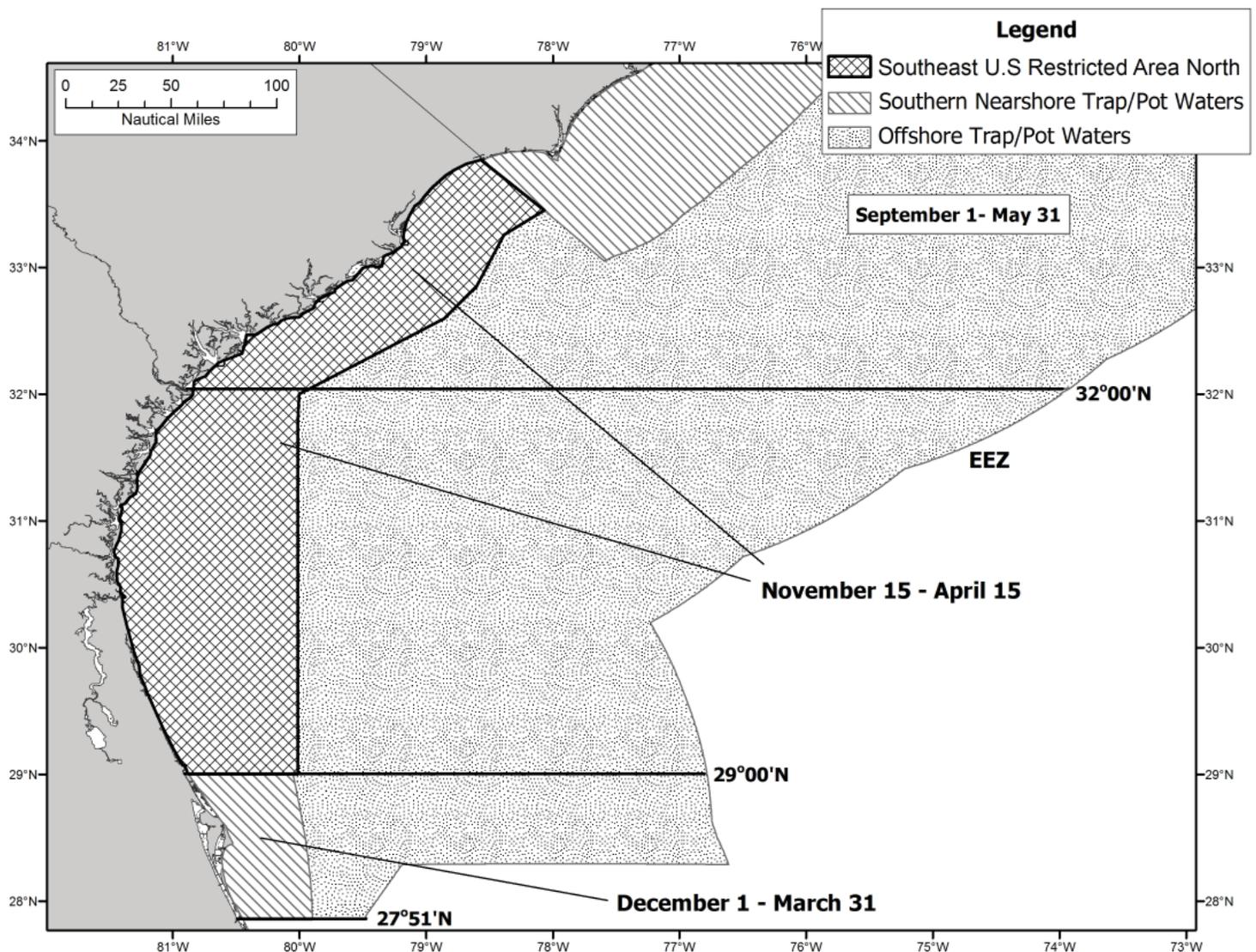
If the color of the rope is the same as or similar to a color code listed above, a white mark may be substituted for that color code.

Gear Marking Color	Applicable Trap/Pot Management Area
<b>RED</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Massachusetts Restricted Area</li> <li>• Northern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters</li> <li>• Northern Inshore State Trap/Pot Waters</li> <li>• Stellwagen Bank Jeffreys Ledge Restricted Area</li> <li>• Great South Channel Restricted Area overlapping Lobster Management Area (LMA) 2 and/or the Outer Cape (OC) LMA.</li> </ul>
<b>ORANGE:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters.</li> </ul>
<b>BLACK</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offshore Trap/Pot Waters; Great South Channel Restricted Area overlapping with the LMA 2/3 Overlap and/or LMA 3</li> </ul>
<b>BLUE &amp; ORANGE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Southeast Restricted Area North- state waters</li> </ul>
<b>GREEN &amp; ORANGE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Southeast Restricted Area North- Federal waters</li> </ul>

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

# Southeast Trap/Pot Management Areas

- Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters (Southeast) Excluding the Southeast Restricted Area North
- Offshore Trap/Pot Waters (Southeast)
- Southeast Restricted Area North



# Southeast 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 and extending inshore to the shoreline or exemption line, with the exception of the exempted waters (see Supplement A-Exempted Areas) and **excluding the Southeast Restricted Area North trap/pot management area** (see page 16).

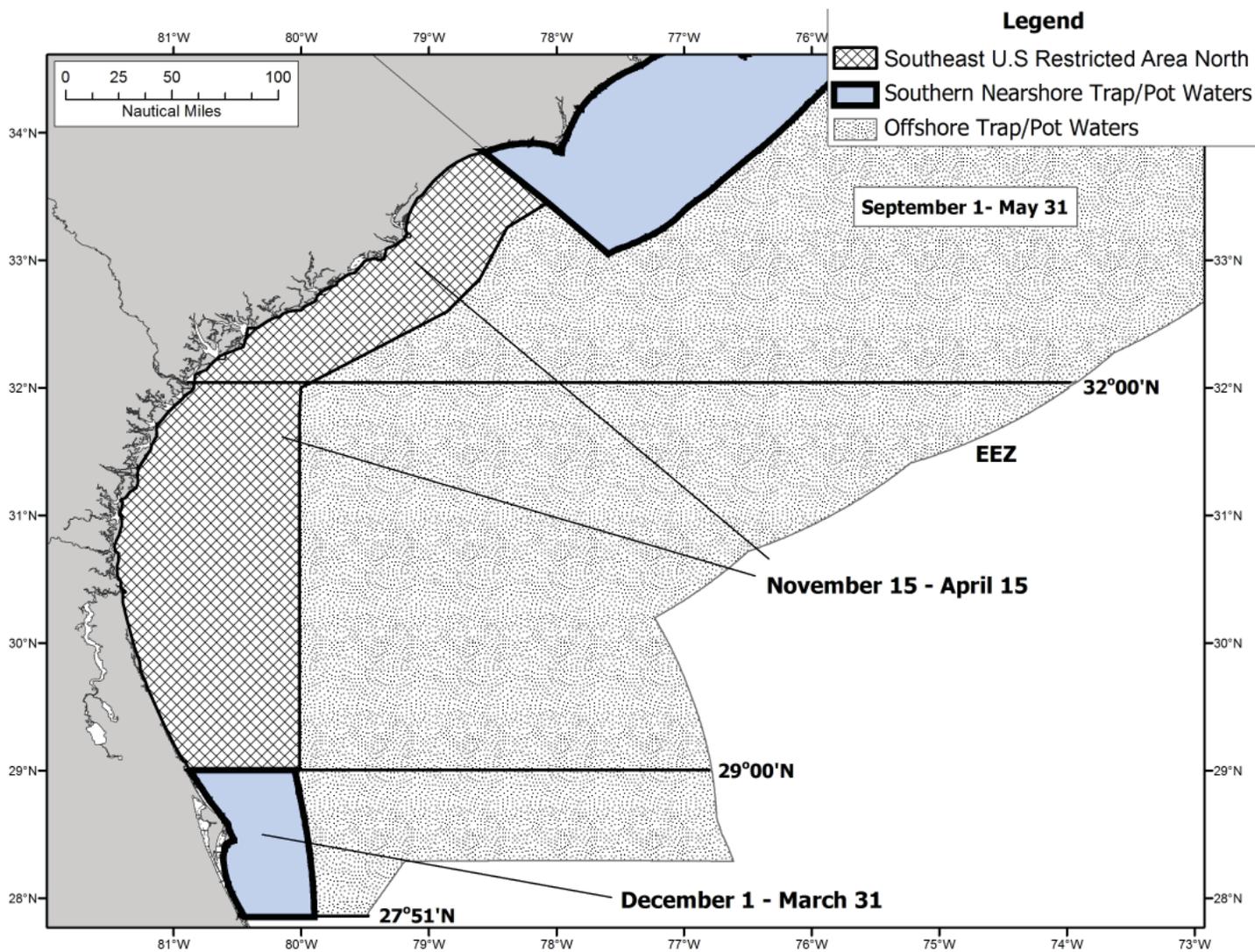
DATES	RESTRICTIONS/REQUIREMENTS SUMMARY
Dec. 1- March 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universal requirements</li> <li>• Gear marking- <b>ORANGE</b></li> <li>• Weak links ≤ 600lb. breaking strength</li> <li>• Sinking groundlines</li> </ul>

### TRAP RESTRICTIONS

Area	Minimum Number of Traps Per Trawl
LMA 4,5,6	None

# Southeast Trap/Pot Management Areas

## Southern Nearshore Trap/Pot Waters



# Southeast Trap/Pot Management Areas

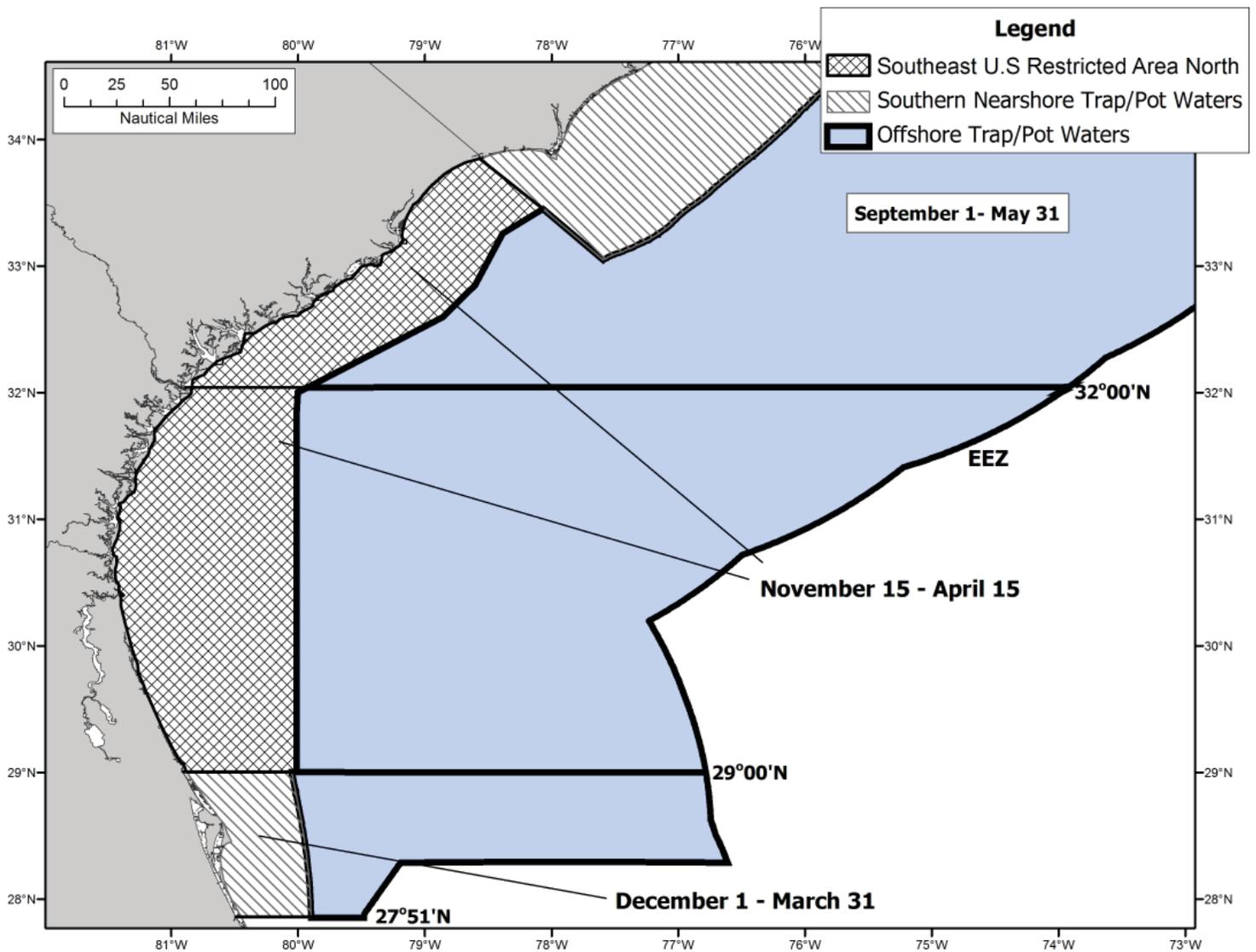
## Offshore Trap/Pot Waters (Southeast)

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

Offshore Trap/Pot Waters off South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida includes all Federal waters of the EEZ offshore of the Southern Nearshore Trap/pot Waters and the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area North south to 27°51'N. lat..

DATES	AREA	RESTRICTIONS/REQUIREMENTS SUMMARY
Sept. 1- May 31	North of 32° N. lat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universal requirements</li> <li>• Gear marking -BLACK</li> <li>• Weak links ≤ 1,500 lbs breaking strength and, ≤ 2,000 lbs breaking strength for the red crab trap/pot fishery.</li> <li>• Sinking groundlines</li> </ul>
Nov. 15-April 15	Between 32° N. lat and 29° N. lat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universal requirements</li> <li>• Gear marking- <b>BLACK</b></li> <li>• Weak links ≤ 1,500 lbs breaking strength and, ≤ 2,000 lbs breaking strength for the red crab trap/pot fishery.</li> <li>• Sinking groundlines</li> </ul>
Dec. 1- March 31	Between 29°N. lat and 27° 51' N. lat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universal requirements</li> <li>• Gear marking- <b>BLACK</b></li> <li>• Weak links ≤ 1,500 lbs breaking strength and, ≤ 2,000 lbs breaking strength for the red crab trap/pot fishery.</li> <li>• Sinking groundlines</li> </ul>

# Southeast Trap/Pot Management Areas Offshore Trap/Pot Waters (Southeast)



# Southeast Trap/Pot Management Areas

## Southeast Restricted Area North

### LOCATION DESCRIPTION

The Southeast U.S. Restricted Area North includes waters north of 29°00' N. (near Ponce de Leon Inlet, FL) to 32°00' N. (near the GA/SC border) from the shoreline eastward to 80°00' W, and off South Carolina, within 35 nautical miles of the shoreline. Little River Inlet, SC, is not located in the Southeast U.S. Restricted Area North.

DATES	AREA	RESTRICTIONS/REQUIREMENTS SUMMARY
<b>November 15 - April 15</b>	ALL of Southeast Restricted Area North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universal requirements</li> <li>• Gear markings- SEE BELOW</li> <li>• Buoy lines must be made of sinking line</li> <li>• Sinking groundlines</li> <li>• Buoy lines- Traps must be set with one buoy line and not multiple trap trawls. Also, whole buoy line (from trap/pot to buoy) should be the same diameter and free of objects (e.g., weights, floats, etc.) and the buoy line must be made of sinking line.</li> </ul>
	FL State Waters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See above</li> <li>• Weak links- ≤ 200lbs</li> <li>• Vertical line breaking strength ≤ 1,500 lbs</li> <li>• Gear marking- <b>BLUE</b> &amp; <b>ORANGE</b></li> </ul>
	SC/GA State waters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See above</li> <li>• Weak links- ≤ 600lbs</li> <li>• Vertical line breaking strength ≤ 2,200 lbs</li> <li>• Gear marking- <b>BLUE</b> &amp; <b>ORANGE</b></li> </ul>
	Federal waters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See above</li> <li>• Weak links- ≤ 600lbs</li> <li>• Vertical line breaking strength ≤ 2,200 lbs</li> <li>• Gear marking- <b>GREEN</b> &amp; <b>ORANGE</b></li> <li>• Trap/pot gear must be brought back to shore at the conclusion of each trip.</li> </ul>

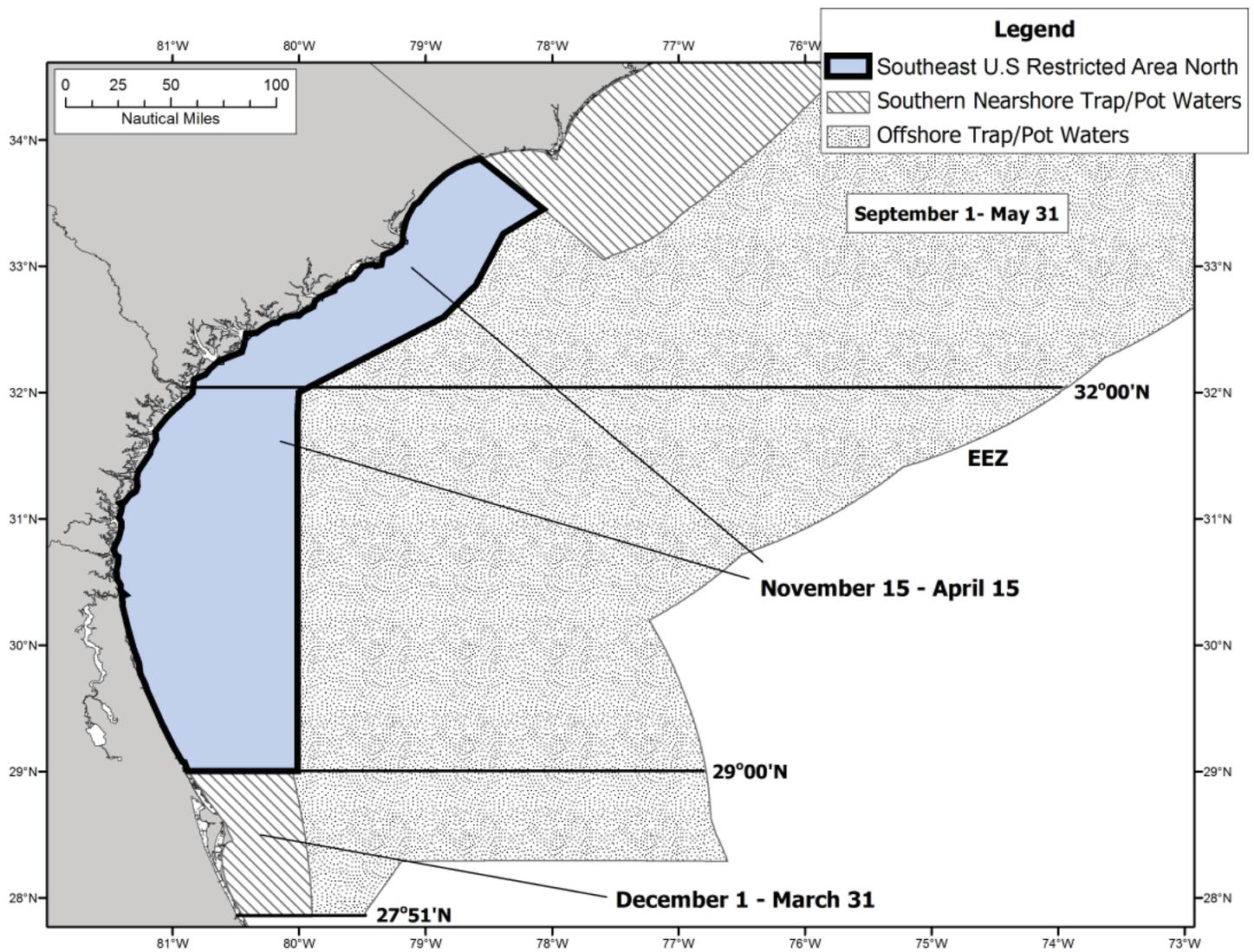
### TRAP RESTRICTIONS

#### MAXIMUM Number of Traps Per Trawl

1

# Southeast Trap/Pot Management Areas

## Southeast Restricted Area North





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**OFFICIAL BUSINESS**

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