

## **Key Issues from Public Comments**

The public comment period closed on September 12, 2011. NMFS received 22 written comments.

### Economics

- Costs are rising
- Experiencing gear loss
- NMFS should conduct extensive cost-benefit analysis on proposed rules

### Safety

- Need two endlines
- Required use of sinking groundline makes it difficult to have large trawls
- Use common sense and be realistic when proposing rules

### Use of Model

- Focus on hotspots (areas of high co-occurrence)
  - Some support for just looking at right whale layer of co-occurrence
- Should target just areas of high whale densities
- Restrictions should be seasonal
- Encouraged by use of model however:
  - Some concern that data in model is outdated
  - Data gaps in the Northeast
    - Whale sightings and gear characterization data off the coast of Maine are underrepresented.
  - Data gaps in the Mid-Atlantic
    - Whale sightings in the Mid-Atlantic are underrepresented.
- Broad brush regulations fail whales and industry
- Should consider and manage each state separately

### Monitoring

- What are the results of the sinking groundline rule?
  - Assess effectiveness of current measures before requiring new ones
- What is the status of humpback whales and how will it affect these measures?
- Some support for requiring annual reporting on gear characterization

### Target

- Should focus on risk reduction rather than a specific target.
  - Focus on risk reduction gives Industry the opportunity to guide the discussion and look for feasible options.
- Lack of defined target is troubling as it is difficult to develop an adequate level conservation measures if the target is unknown (i.e., how much is enough)

### Gear Marking

- Support for more effective gear marking scheme
- Increase the number of marks
- Change the color scheme so it is by state/fishery

### Want Credit for Current Measures

- Evaluate the impact of recent fisheries management actions on the number of vertical lines
  - Trap reductions/move sector management
- Already doing enough. Oppose further restrictions
- Trap reductions already occurring in lobster and southeast black sea bass fisheries
- Black sea bass gear is tended constantly
- Southeast black sea bass fishery is proposing a limited entry.

### Further restrictions unnecessary

- Current regulations are frustrating and costly
- Support for status quo/no action alternative
  - Have never seen a whale while fishing
  - Have never entangled a whale
  - Costs to fishermen to address vertical line entanglements will outweigh the benefit to large whales because they will still be vertical line entanglements occurring from Canadian fisheries
  - Current whale populations are increasing without rules for vertical lines. Let current regulations run their course.