



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
NORTHEAST REGION  
One Blackburn Drive  
Gloucester, MA 01930-2298

March 25, 2002

Dear Commercial Gillnet Fisherman:

This letter is to help clarify the recent rules issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), pertaining to the Mid-Atlantic anchored gillnet fishery.

Recently, NMFS informed all lobster trap/pot and gillnet fishermen of new regulations implementing the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP). The information provided by NMFS summarized the Dynamic Area Management (DAM) program, Seasonal Area Management (SAM) program, and expanded gear modifications to the Mid-Atlantic and Offshore Lobster Waters, as well as the modified requirements for gillnet gear in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Since that time, NMFS published a correction in the *Federal Register* to clarify and correct the January 10, 2002 final rule that expanded gear modifications to the Mid-Atlantic and Offshore Lobster Waters and modified the requirements for anchored gillnet gear in the Mid-Atlantic Coastal Waters (67 FR 1300). The document corrects the final rule such that **Mid-Atlantic anchored gillnet fishermen are required to comply with the expanded gear modifications from December 1 through March 31**. NMFS had inadvertently omitted these dates from the final rule. The expanded gear modifications are the same as were written in the original permit letter and are repeated below:

Anchored Gillnet Fishermen

An *anchored gillnet* is defined in the regulations at 50 CFR 229.2 as "any gillnet gear, including a sink gillnet or stab net, that is set anywhere in the water column and which is anchored, secured or weighted to the bottom of the sea."

Mid-Atlantic Coastal Waters (See Figure 1)

Fishermen with gillnet gear in Mid-Atlantic Coastal Waters now have mandatory gear requirements rather than the Gillnet Take Reduction Technology List. These fishermen are now required to abide by the below gear modifications from December 1 through March 31:

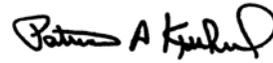
1. Install weak links at the buoy, and in the center of the floatline on each 50-fathom net panel or every 25 fathoms on the floatline for longer panels. The maximum breaking strength of these weak links is 1,100 lbs (498.8 kg) for both the buoy and floatline weak links. The weak links must be placed as close to each individual buoy as operationally feasible.
2. Return all gillnet gear to port with their vessels, or, if the gillnets are left at sea to continue fishing, to secure the nets

on each end with anchors that have the holding power of at least a 22 lb (9.9 kg) Danforth-style anchor.



This letter provides only a summary of the approved regulations. To obtain these regulations in their entirety, please call 978-281-9328. In addition, these regulations are available by accessing the ALWTRP web page ([www.nero.nmfs.gov/whaletrp/](http://www.nero.nmfs.gov/whaletrp/)). If you have any questions regarding these regulations, please call 978-281-9328.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patricia A. Kurkul". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with a large initial "P" and "K".

Patricia A. Kurkul  
Regional Administrator

Enclosure

Figure 1

*ALWTRP Regulated Gillnet Waters*

