

The NOAA FISHERIES NAVIGATOR

New Federal Fishery Management Plan for Jonah Crabs

Jonah crabs are the newest species to come under federal fishery management. In 2015, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission approved an Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Jonah Crab. States within the management range (Maine through Virginia) were required to comply with the Commission's Jonah Crab Plan in 2016. The Commission recommended that we take action in federal waters. In response, we recently finalized measures that complement the Commission's Plan.

Why is the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission leading Jonah Crab management?

Historically, Jonah crabs have been harvested as an incidental catch in the American lobster trap fishery. More than 90 percent of Cancer crab (the genus that includes Jonah crab) landings between 1990 and 2014 were from pot and trap gear. Lobster harvesters did not traditionally target Jonah crabs, but sometimes kept and brought the crabs to market if they caught some while lobster fishing. Due to this linkage between the lobster fishery and the Jonah crab fishery, and an increase in landings, the Commission's American Lobster Board developed an Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Jonah Crab that was implemented by states in 2016.

Why is management necessary?

Landings dramatically increased from nearly 3 million pounds in the early 1990s to more than 17 million pounds in 2014, as Jonah crabs have become a target of lobster harvesters, particularly in Southern New England as lobster abundance has declined. The Commission initiated management of Jonah crab at that time out of concern for future

sustainability. The specific goal of the Commission's Jonah Crab Plan is, "to promote conservation, reduce the possibility of recruitment failure, and allow the full utilization of the resource by the industry."

What has NOAA Fisheries approved?

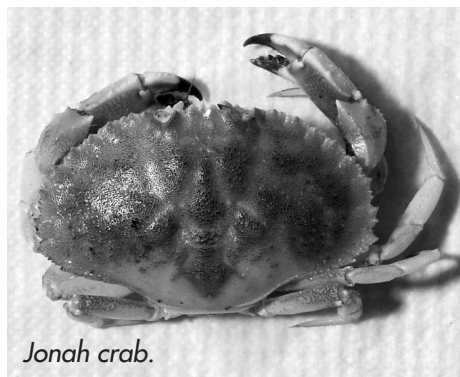
We approved a suite of measures in federal waters, consistent with the Commission's plan and existing state regulations. Table 1 summarizes the approved measures.

Are there Commission recommendations that we did not approve?

The Commission recommended two measures that we did not propose in this action. The Commission's Jonah Crab Plan included harvester reporting requirements, but was subsequently revised to expand lobster

and Jonah crab harvester reporting requirements. We will consider those recommendations for both fisheries through a separate federal action. The Commission also adopted measures for a regulated Jonah crab claw fishery. However, states have already approved measures ranging from a prohibition on landing claws to a fully-regulated, targeted claw fishery. Rather

than approving a measure that would create inconsistencies between state and federal regulations, we did not propose regulations for the claw fishery, deferring management of claw harvest to individual states.



Jonah crab.

NOAA photo

Table 1. Approved Jonah Crab Regulations

SECTOR	MANAGEMENT MEASURE	REQUIREMENT
Commercial	Vessel Permitting	Landing requires a lobster permit
	Minimum Size	4.75-inch carapace width
	Broodstock Protection	Prohibit retention of egg-bearing females
	Incidental Catch Limit	Up to 1,000 crabs per trip and no more than 50% of catch onboard, by weight
	Dealer Permits and Reporting	Mandatory permit and reporting
Recreational	Broodstock Protection	Prohibit retention of egg-bearing females
	Catch Limit	50 crabs per day

decrease the entanglement risk of whales in gear with vertical lines.

When were the new measures effective?

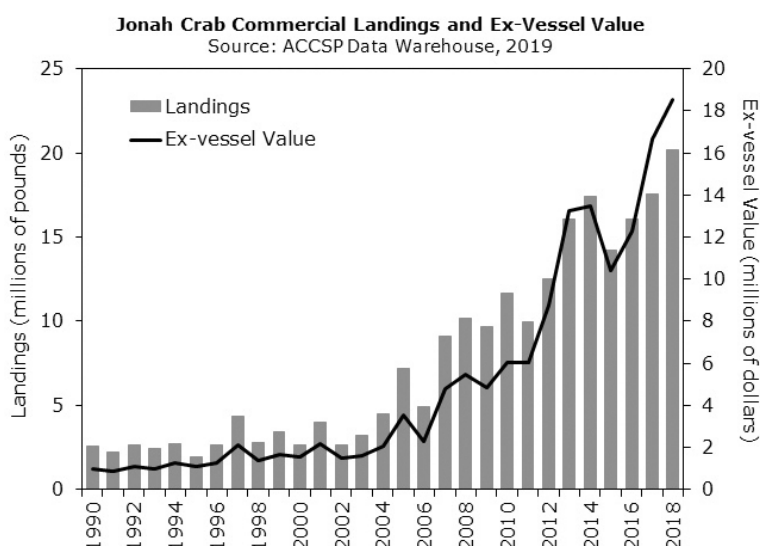
The final rule became effective on December 12, 2019. Enforcement of federal dealer permitting and reporting requirements were deferred until January 1, 2020, to allow time to apply for and issue permits.

How will this rule change the fishery for current participants?

We do not expect much to change for Jonah crab harvesters. The Commission's goal was to develop measures that capture the standard 2015 fishery practices and prevent future expansion of the fishery. For example, the incidental catch limit was set at a level that captures 99 percent of past trips.

For more information, contact Allison Murphy, Sustainable Fisheries Division, at 978-281-9122 or email her at Allison.Murphy@noaa.gov.

Figure 1. Jonah Crab Landings, 1990-2018



Will these approved measures increase the number of vertical lines in the water and, therefore, increase interaction risks for large whales?

No. The rule links Jonah crab harvest to the lobster permit, and these measures regulate the catch of Jonah crabs within the existing lobster trap limits. As a result, this action would not allow for additional traps beyond what are already allowed in the lobster fishery. In addition, we are working with the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team and the Commission on the issue of whale entanglements. New measures may be introduced at a future date to

The eVTR Advantage

We now offer several ways for you to submit your Vessel Trip Reports electronically. Currently, electronic Vessel Trip Reports (eVTRs) are:

Required for Party/Charter vessels that are permitted to fish for species managed by the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

Available to commercial fishermen and Party/Charter fishermen who are permitted to fish only for species managed by the New England Fishery Management Council.

Note that we are working closely with the Mid-Atlantic and New England Fishery Management Councils on a regulatory action that, if approved, may require all fishermen with Greater Atlantic Region federal permits to use eVTRs.

See eVTRs, page 4

THIS SUPPLEMENT PROVIDED BY NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE'S GREATER ATLANTIC REGIONAL OFFICE

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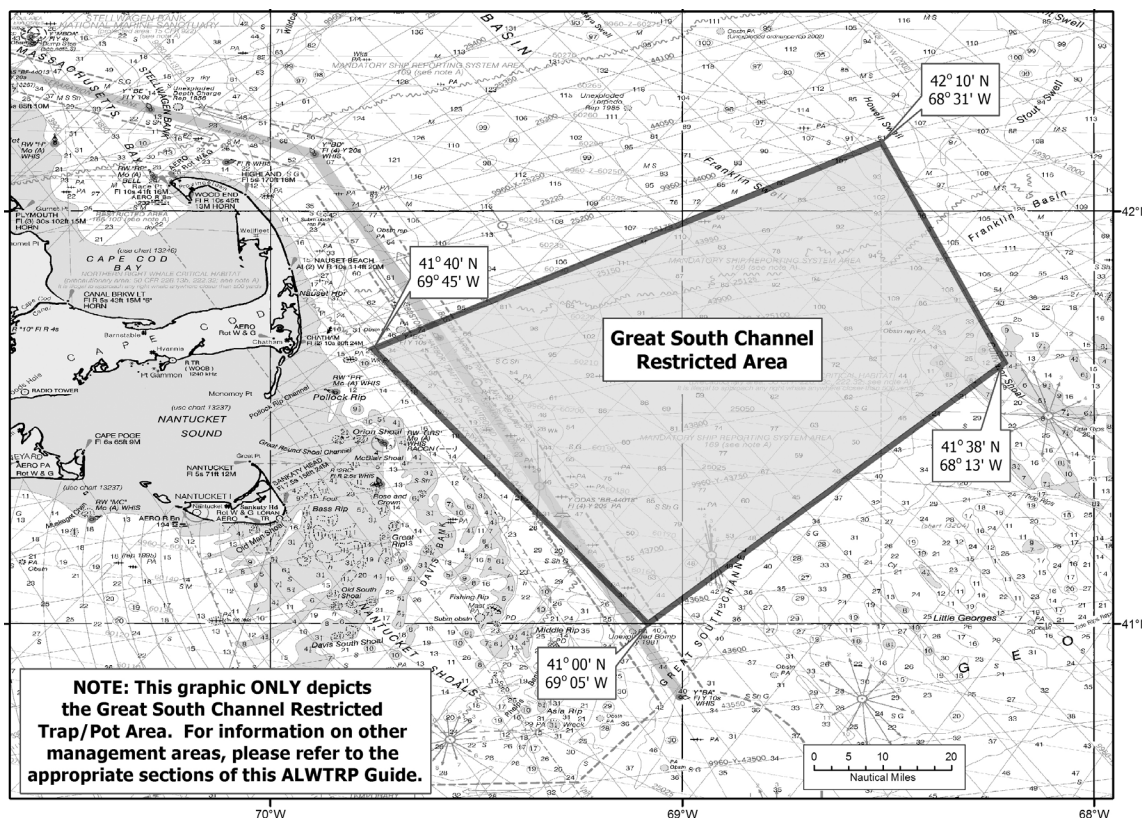
Annual Reminder: Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan Closures

The Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan was implemented to reduce serious injuries and deaths of right, humpback, and fin whales due to entanglement in commercial trap/pot and gillnet gear from Maine to Florida.

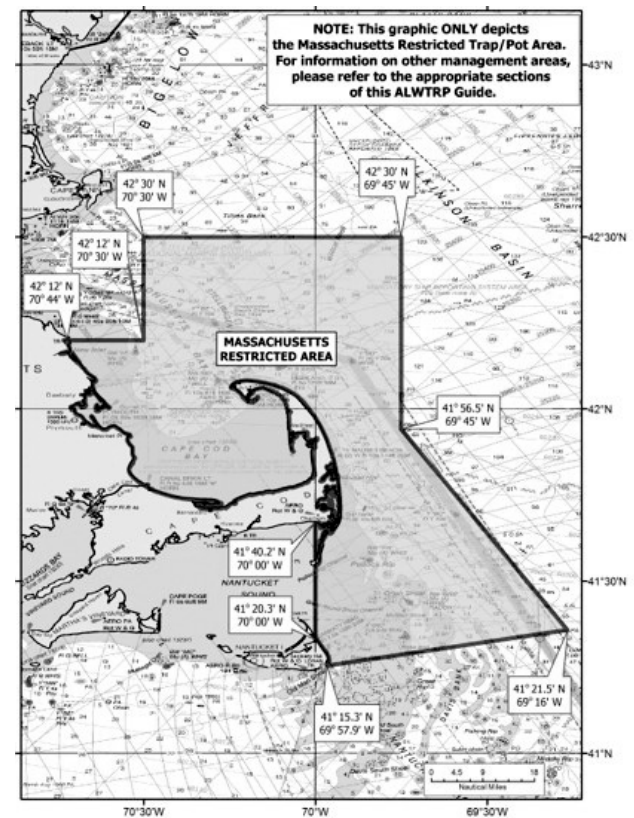
Trap/pot and gillnet gear restrictions, modifications, and area-specific gear markings are also required in areas that are open to fishing. Please visit www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alwtrp more details on these requirements. If you have questions about requirements, please contact the GARFO Protected Resources Division 978-281-9328.

ATLANTIC LARGE WHALE TAKE REDUCTION PLAN	
CLOSED to ALL trap/pot fishing	
Management Area	Dates
Massachusetts Restricted Area	Feb. 1- April 30
Great South Channel Restricted Trap/Pot Area	April 1- June 30
CLOSED to ALL gillnet fishing	
Management Area	Dates
Cape Cod Bay Restricted Gillnet Area	Jan. 1- May 15
Great South Channel Restricted Gillnet Area	April 1- June 30

Great South Channel Trap/Pot and Gillnet Closure Area (April 1-June 30)



Trap/Pot Massachusetts Restricted Area Closure Area (Feb. 1-April 30)



Cooperative Research Branch Invites Fishermen to Inaugural Research Summits

In early February, our Northeast Fisheries Science Center's (NEFSC) Cooperative Research Branch released a summary report of the outcomes from a series of Stakeholder Engagement Sessions last August and September. We held eight listening sessions in ports from Maine to Virginia to talk with fishermen, academics, nonprofits, state agencies, and seafood and fishing industry representatives. We learned about their experiences participating in our cooperative research projects and discussed research ideas and priorities for the future.

NEFSC Cooperative Research Branch Chief Anna Mercer described the recent engagement sessions and summary report as “a critical

step towards developing a comprehensive vision and path for cooperative research in the Greater Atlantic region.”

During the workshops, better communication and coordination of cooperative research across the Greater Atlantic region were identified as top priorities. To address these issues, NEFSC will be hosting two free one-day Cooperative Research Summits this spring. One summit will be in New England, and the other in the Mid-Atlantic area.

These summits will bring together scientists, managers, fishermen, and industry representatives to 1) communicate and coordinate the variety of cooperative fisheries research being conducted in the region, 2) discuss opportunities for

greater industry participation, 3) review funding opportunities, and 4) develop best practices for applying cooperative research results to assessments and management. The summits will also include poster sessions and ample time for informal conversation.

If you are interested in learning about or participating in cooperative research, we encourage you to attend a summit. A participation stipend will be available for active commercial fishermen.

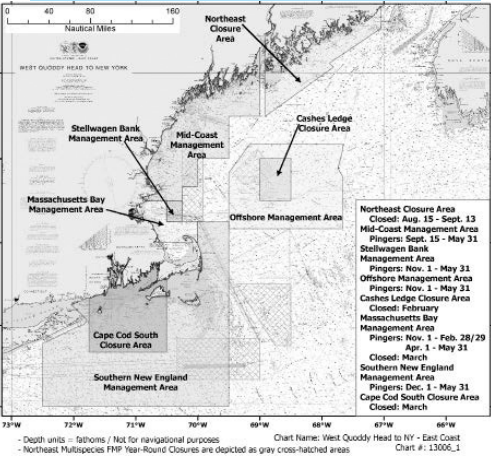
For more information about the summits and to read the summary report, go to: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/outreach-and-education/northeast-cooperative-research-summits>

Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Plan Annual Management Area Reminder

The Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Plan was implemented to reduce bycatch of harbor porpoise in gillnet fisheries from Maine to the North Carolina/South Carolina border. Management under the Plan includes pinger requirements, seasonal closure areas, and consequence closure areas. The following table lists upcoming dates for Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Plan management area restrictions that gillnet fishermen need to know.

Details on gear modifications, pinger specifications, and management area maps are available on the Plan website www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/marine-mammal-protection/harbor-porpoise-take-reduction-plan

If you have questions about requirements, please contact the GARFO Protected Resources Division 978-281-9328.



Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Plan		
Northeast Gillnet Fisheries (All)		
Management Area	Dates	Closure or Gear Modifications
Northeast Closure Area	August 15- September 13	CLOSED to ALL gillnet fishing
Mid-Coast Management Area	September 15- May 31	Pingers Required
Massachusetts Bay Management Area	November 1- February 28/29	Pingers Required
	March 1-31	CLOSED to ALL gillnet fishing
	April 1- May 31	Pingers Required
Stellwagen Bank Management Area	November 1- May 31	Pingers Required
Southern New England Management Area	December 1- May 31	Pingers Required
Cape Cod South Closure Area	March 1-31	CLOSED to ALL gillnet fishing
Offshore Management Area	November 1- May 31	Pingers Required
Cashes Ledge Closure Area	February 1-28/29	CLOSED to ALL gillnet fishing
Mid- Atlantic Gillnet Fisheries (Large and Small Mesh Requirements)		
Area	Dates Gear Modifications Required	Dates CLOSED to gillnet fishing
Large Mesh Gillnet (Mesh Size 7-18 inches)		
Mudhole North Management Area	Jan. 1- Jan. 31; March 16-March 31; April 21- April 30	Feb. 15- March 15; April 1-April 20
Mudhole South Management Area	Jan. 1- Jan. 31; March 16-March 31; April 21- April 30	Feb. 1- March 15; April 1-April 20
Southern Mid-Atlantic Management Area	Feb. 1- Feb. 14; March 16- April 30	Feb. 15-March 15
Waters off New Jersey Management Area	Jan1- Mar 31, April 21-30	April 1-April 20
Small Mesh Gillnet (Mesh Size >5 inches to < 7 inches)		
Waters off New Jersey Management Area	Jan. 1- April 30	-
Mudhole North Management Area	Jan. 1-Feb 14, March 16-31, April 21-30	Feb. 15- March 15
Mudhole South Management Area	Jan. 1- Jan. 31; March 16-April 30	Feb. 1- March 15
Southern Mid-Atlantic Management Area	Feb. 1-April 30	-

Reminder: You Can Apply For and Renew Your Permits Online

Fishermen with existing and valid federal fishing permits can renew their 2019 federal fishing permits for the 2020 fishing year using our efficient web-based Fish Online system. In the online system, you do not have to include or upload copies of your Coast Guard documentation or your state registration, and gear codes are no longer required.

To access the online renewal and application systems, create or sign-in to your Fish Online account and click on 'Application Forms' in the left margin. For assistance with Fish Online, call our Help Desk at 978-281-9188.

- In addition, you can also apply online for a variety of permits, including:
- Initial Vessel Permit
 - Vessel Operator Permit
 - Letter of Authorization
 - Gillnet tag and annual certification forms
 - Initial Dealer Permit
 - Letter of Acknowledgement (LOA)
 - Temporary Possession Letter of Authorization
 - Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP)
 - Exempted Educational Activity Authorization (EEAA)
 - Scallop Research Set-Aside Letter of Authorization (RSA LOA)
 - Scientific Research permit (SRP)

For assistance with permit applications and renewals, call our Analysis and Program Support Division at 978-282-8438 or email <NMFS.GAR.Permits@noaa.gov>.



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Offshore Wind Energy Spins Up in 2020

What Is Happening?

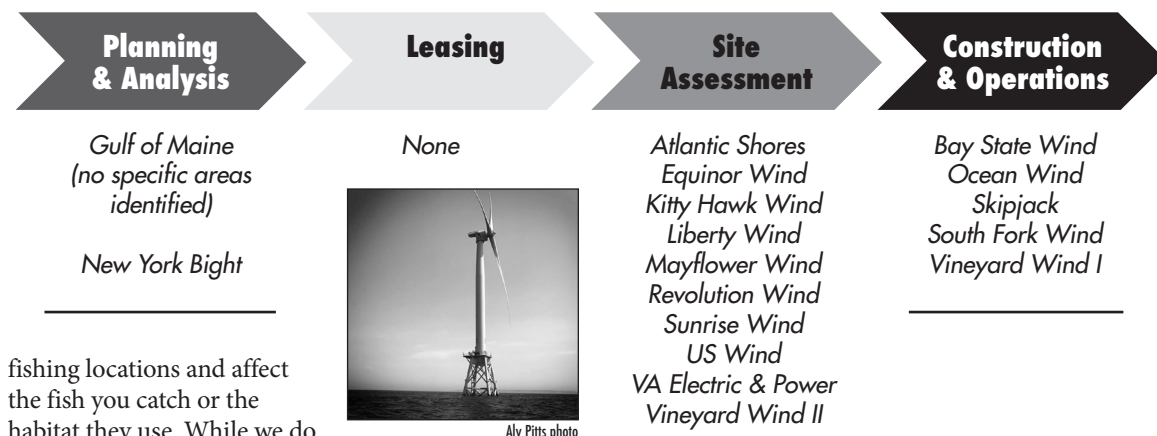
Although timelines are uncertain and subject to change, we expect 2020 to be a busy year for offshore wind energy development. Off Block Island, five wind turbines are currently generating electricity, but more offshore turbines may be built in the coming years all along the Atlantic coast. From Maine through North Carolina, there are 15 offshore wind energy leases with projects in various stages of development. It is likely that many offshore wind energy projects will begin the regulatory process and move closer toward construction and operations.

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) decides whether to approve all offshore wind energy projects after first reviewing each project's construction and operations plan (COP). BOEM is currently reviewing five COPs, which lay out details of the project, including the proposed number/locations of turbines and expected construction schedules. BOEM is expecting another five or six COPs by the end of 2020 for other projects. We expect BOEM will also identify additional specific wind energy areas in the New York Bight to lease to developers in the near future. BOEM also recently established a regional task force in coordination with the states of Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts to start discussing offshore wind development with stakeholders.

Why Is This Important?

Some of these projects may overlap with your

Offshore Wind Energy Development Phases and Current Project Status (courtesy of BOEM)



fishing locations and affect the fish you catch or the habitat they use. While we do not expect wind energy areas to be closed to fishing, if these projects are approved and turbines are constructed, you may not be able to fish close to the turbines during construction activities. Once built, turbines may also affect where and how you fish or transit through certain areas. You have an opportunity to learn about and comment on wind projects at all stages of development.

How Can I Stay Informed or Get Involved?

It can be difficult to keep track of the latest developments in offshore wind energy projects. Here are some helpful resources to keep you informed regarding the latest developments in offshore wind energy projects:

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the New England and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Councils routinely talk about wind energy developments during their meetings. See their websites for calendars that list upcoming meetings and links to what will be discussed at each meeting. You can also sign up for their email lists to get meeting announcements.

The Mid-Atlantic Council has a specific offshore wind energy page, including a listing of notices to fishermen, upcoming meetings, and opportunities for comment. You can also sign up to receive future notices via email on that page.

BOEM's renewable energy website contains information about the development process, status of projects, and published research, and a webpage dedicated to communication and engagement with the Atlantic fishing industry, including contact information for fisheries liaisons required for each project.

What is NOAA's Role?

We are a cooperating agency and have an important role in the offshore wind process. We work with BOEM to help evaluate each wind project and provide BOEM and developers with data and

analysis on the status of and potential impacts to fish, marine mammals, protected species, habitat, and fishing activities. BOEM is required to consult with us on the potential impacts of the project on fish habitats and endangered and threatened species. In addition, we also review analyses supporting each project to ensure that the analysis used to make decisions includes the most up-to-date scientific data available and fully considers impacts to the fishing industry and marine resources. Our goal is to facilitate offshore wind energy development and minimize any potential impacts to marine resources and fishing communities.

For more information, contact Doug Christel, Sustainable Fisheries Division, at 978-281-9141 or email him at Douglas.Christel@noaa.gov

eVTRs *Continued from page 1*

You can choose from several smartphone, tablet, or computer apps. Reporting is quick, easy, and convenient. The applications (apps) offer:

- Pre-filled fields
- Submit via internet from anywhere
- No paper or stamps
- Immediate confirmation
- Online storage
- Access to past reports
- Secure data

Popular eVTR Apps

GARFO/NOAA Fish Online

To report your trips, use our free Fish Online app available in the iPhone App Store (for iPhones/iPads), or use Fish Online on any web browser. To get started, you need a username and password. Contact our Help Desk at (978) 281-9188 or nmfs.gar.helpdesk@noaa.gov to get these or if you have questions.

ACCSP eTrips/Mobile

eTRIPS/mobile 2 works on iPhones, iPads, handheld Android devices, and any Windows device, and is available in the App Store. You need a SAFIS account to use this app. Call the eTRIPS 24/7 Support Desk at (800) 984-0810 or email support@harborlightsoftware.com to get started.

For more information, contact your local NOAA Port Agent or visit our website at fisheries.noaa.gov/evtr

