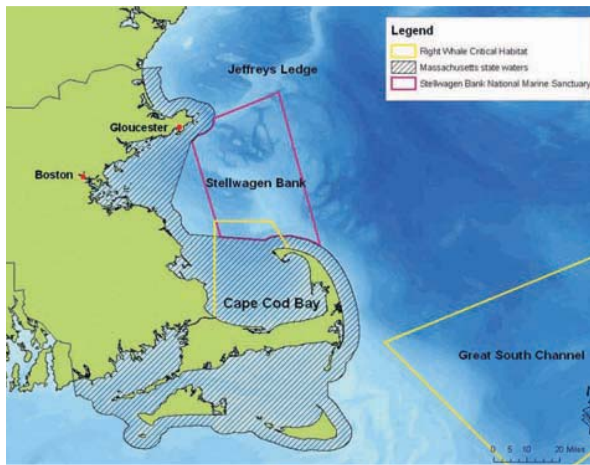


HABITATS

The waters off Massachusetts are important feeding habitat for protected and endangered whales, including minke, humpback, finback, and North Atlantic right whales. The right whale population is estimated at 400 individuals.



Massachusetts lobstermen have removed 3,000 miles of floating rope from the water column since switching to sinking groundline to reduce the risk of entanglements.

The conservation efforts of Massachusetts lobstermen make our waters safer for all large whale species.



PARTNERS

The Massachusetts Lobstermen's Association and Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries have partnered with whale watch companies, the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, the Ocean Conservancy, local restaurants, fish markets, and seafood dealers to bring you the Massachusetts Lobster labeling and promotion program.

Ask your local seafood retailer or restaurant for Massachusetts Lobster!

www.masslobster.org



MASSACHUSETTS LOBSTER FISHING

THE RIGHT WAY



Massachusetts is protecting whales and preserving its local lobster industry.

Massachusetts



THE AMERICAN LOBSTER

The American Lobster is fished from Canada to New Jersey. In Massachusetts, the near-shore lobster fishery consists of independent fishermen who operate their own vessels. Lobster is the most valuable species caught in Massachusetts waters.

About 900 Massachusetts lobstermen fish in the near-shore area from vessels that range in size from 18 to 42 feet. They set baited traps on the ocean floor to attract lobsters and typically make day-trips to haul between 150 and 400 traps per day.



State-wide they set around 360,000 traps per year and land about 9 million pounds of lobster. The majority of landings and effort takes place from June - October.

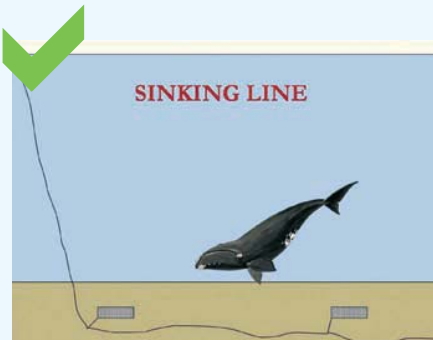
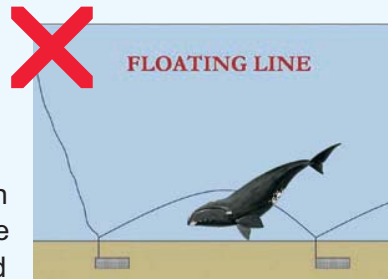
The fishery is regulated with trap limits, “escape vents” to allow undersized lobster to escape, and rules on allowable minimum and maximum sizes of lobster. All egg-bearing females are released. Most fishermen mark the shells of egg-bearing females which protects the lobster from harvest for 2 to 4 years.



LOBSTER GEAR

Lobster gear is connected to the surface by a buoyline, which allows fishermen to locate their traps and haul them to the surface. In Massachusetts, traps are typically connected on the seafloor in 10- 25 pot strings using a “groundline.”

However, groundlines made of floating rope rise up in the water column and can entangle large whales and other marine life.



Entanglement in fishing gear is a major cause of injury and mortality for large whales. The use of sinking groundlines reduces the risk of entanglement by removing that rope from the water column.

Massachusetts is the first and only state to require year-round use of sinking groundline in all state waters.

MASSACHUSETTS LOBSTER LABEL

Many Massachusetts lobstermen are voluntarily labeling their catch to identify the product as locally-caught and to signify their contribution to whale protection.

The Massachusetts Lobster label allows consumers to identify local lobsters, caught by Massachusetts lobstermen using gear that reduces the risk of whale entanglements. Sinking line is more expensive and wears out faster, but Massachusetts lobstermen have made a substantial investment in whale-safer gear and are complying with regulations. Besides sinking groundlines, Massachusetts lobstermen have other rules to protect whales, including:

- Break-away links at the base of surface buoys
- Lost gear removal programs
- Seasonal gear restrictions in Right Whale Critical Habitat in Cape Cod Bay

Massachusetts lobstermen also participate in a federal process to identify other measures to reduce the risk of any interaction with whales.

Support the Massachusetts lobster industry and support whale protection.

