



Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council
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Michael P. Luisi, Chairman | P. Weston Townsend, Vice Chairman
Christopher M. Moore, Ph.D., Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 29, 2021
To: Chris Moore, Executive Director
From: Karson Coutre, Staff
Subject: Update on Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team discussions relative to the Mid-Atlantic region

NMFS is expecting the final rule this summer for modifications to the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP) intended to achieve at least a 60 percent reduction in mortalities or serious injuries of right whales in the Northeast Jonah crab and lobster trap/pot fisheries. These fisheries deploy about 93 percent of the buoy lines fished in areas where right whales occur. [Measures in this rule](#) include line reduction, restricted areas/times for buoy lines, testing out ropeless fishing, weak line or inserts, and gear marking.

In 2021, the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Team (ALWTRT) will be asked to recommend risk reduction measures for other Atlantic trap/pot and gillnet fisheries along the entire east coast. Depending on the proposed measures, this could impact MAFMC managed fisheries for monkfish, spiny dogfish, black sea bass, bluefish, and scup, due to their use of pot/trap or gillnet gear. This spring and summer the ALWTRT has worked to develop and expand the Decision Support Tool to cover all trap/pot and gillnet fisheries in ALWTRP waters. On June 28 and July 1, 2021, the full team had a two-day meeting to determine what types of measures to take to scoping.

Upcoming steps in this process include:

- Public scoping meetings are anticipated to occur in August/September, including presentations to the Councils.
- The full ALWTRT will reconvene soon after scoping to discuss scoping results, assemble potential alternatives, and further identify data needs to support decision making.
- The full team will develop and provide recommendations to NMFS to analyze for proposed rulemaking in spring 2022.

More information on the ALWTRT meetings including recordings and presentations can be found on the [Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan webpage](#).