

Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Plan: Mid-Atlantic

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For more information,
contact NOAA Fisheries
Service Greater Atlantic
Regional Office Protected
Resources Division at
978-281-9328 or visit the
HPTRP website at www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/hptrp.

Overview of the Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Plan

The Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) directs NOAA Fisheries Service to reduce marine mammal injuries and mortality caused by incidental interactions with commercial fishing gear. In particular, the MMPA requires that NOAA Fisheries Service protect any marine mammal stock in which the potential biological removal level is being exceeded. Potential biological removal (PBR) is defined as the number of human-caused incidental mortalities a marine mammal stock can withstand annually and still reach and maintain an optimum population level.

The Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Plan (HPTRP) was developed to reduce interactions between harbor porpoises and commercial gillnet gear in waters off New England and the Mid-Atlantic. On December 1, 1998, NOAA Fisheries Service published a final rule in the Federal Register to implement the HPTRP. Subsequent to the final rule publication, two minor revisions to the HPTRP were made.

The HPTRP manages harbor porpoise bycatch in two components: the New England component and the Mid-Atlantic component. In New England, the HPTRP utilizes seasonal time and area closures that correspond with the highest seasonal abundances of harbor porpoises. Also in New England, acoustic alarms, or pingers, are required seasonally in specific management areas to deter harbor porpoises and to prevent entanglement in commercial gillnet gear. In the Mid-Atlantic, time and area closures are utilized in combination with seasonal gear modification requirements. Gear modification requirements ensure that commercial gillnet gear is deployed in configurations least likely to result in harbor porpoise entanglement.

This outreach guide pertains to the Mid-Atlantic component of the HPTRP described in 50 CFR 229.34. A separate outreach guide is available for the New England component of the HPTRP (described in 50 CFR 229.33). For more information about the HPTRP, contact NOAA Fisheries Service Greater Atlantic Regional Office Protected Resources Division at 978-281-9328 or visit the HPTRP website at www.greateratlantic.fisheries.noaa.gov/hptrp.

General Harbor Porpoise Information

Harbor porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*) are found in coastal and offshore waters where they prey on small schooling fish and can become entangled in gillnet gear. These animals are difficult to study because they are widely dispersed in small groups and spend little time at the surface. The southern-most stock of harbor porpoises is the Gulf of Maine/Bay of Fundy stock, which is the stock that is managed by the HPTRP. Along the east coast of North America, they can be found from Labrador to North Carolina and their distribution varies unpredictably from year to year depending on environmental conditions such as water temperature and prey distribution. Generally, in the winter, a portion of this stock moves south to waters between New York and North Carolina. In the summer, harbor porpoises are generally found in the northern Gulf of Maine and southern Bay of Fundy area. In the fall and spring, they are widely dispersed from Maine to New Jersey.

The most recent US and Gulf of Mexico marine mammal stock assessment report provides the most current information about the Gulf of Maine/Bay of Fundy stock of harbor porpoises, including PBR level, population abundance, and estimates of incidental bycatch.



Regulated and Exempted Waters

Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Plan regulations apply to all U.S. waters in the Atlantic except for those designated as Exempted Waters. Exempted Waters are those waters landward of the first bridge over any embayment, harbor, or inlet, and waters landward of the following areas:

New York

Moriches Bay Inlet

Fire Island Inlet

Jones Inlet

New Jersey/Delaware

Barnegat Inlet

Beach Haven to Brigantine Inlet

Cape May Inlet

Delaware Bay¹

Maryland/Virginia

Ocean City Inlet

Chincoteague to Ship Shoal Inlet¹

Little Inlet

Smith Island Inlet

North Carolina¹

¹All marine and tidal waters landward of the 72 COLREGS demarcation line, as depicted or noted on nautical charts published by NOAA and described in 33 CFR part 80.

For exact coordinates of the exempted waters, please see 50 CFR part 229.34 or call the NOAA Fisheries Service Northeast Region Protected Resources Division at 978-281-9328.

HPTRP Management Area Boundaries

The Mid-Atlantic portion of the HPTRP pertains to waters west of 72°30' W. longitude to the Mid-Atlantic shoreline from the southern shoreline of Long Island, New York to the North Carolina/South Carolina border. It includes time and area closures to gillnet fishing unless the gear meets certain specifications. Gillnet fishing in Mid-Atlantic waters during regulated periods is regulated differently for small mesh and large mesh gear. The plan also includes some time and area closures in which gillnet fishing is prohibited regardless of the gear specifications.

Waters off New Jersey Management Area

Latitude	Longitude
40°50.1'	72°30.0' (NY Shoreline)
38°47.0'	72°30.0'
38°47.0'	75°05.0' (DE Shoreline)

Southern Mid-Atlantic Management Area

Latitude	Longitude
38°47.0'	75°05.0' (DE Shoreline)
38°47.0'	72°30.0'
33°51.1'	72°30.0'
33°51.1'	78°32.5' (NC/SC Border)

Mudhole North Management Area

Latitude	Longitude
40°28.1'	74°00.0' (NJ Shoreline)
40°30.0'	74°00.0'
40°30.0'	73°20.0'
40°05.0'	73°20.0'
40°05.0'	74°02.0' (NJ Shoreline)

Mudhole South Management Area

Latitude	Longitude
40°05.0'	73°31.0'
40°05.0'	73°00.0'
39°51.0'	73°00.0'
39°51.0'	73°31.0'
40°05.0'	73°31.0'

Note: The Mudhole North and Mudhole South Management Areas are located entirely within the Waters off New Jersey Management Area. In instances where the boundaries of HPTRP management areas overlap, the more stringent restrictions will apply. For more information or for further clarification, please see 50 CFR part 229.34 or call the NOAA Fisheries Service Northeast Region Protected Resources Division at 978-281-9328.



Waters off New Jersey Management Area

Large Mesh Gillnet Gear (7 - 18 inches)

April 1 through April 20 **Closed (No Large Mesh Gillnets)**

Jan. 1 through Mar. 31;
April 21 through April 30 **Gear Modification Requirements:**

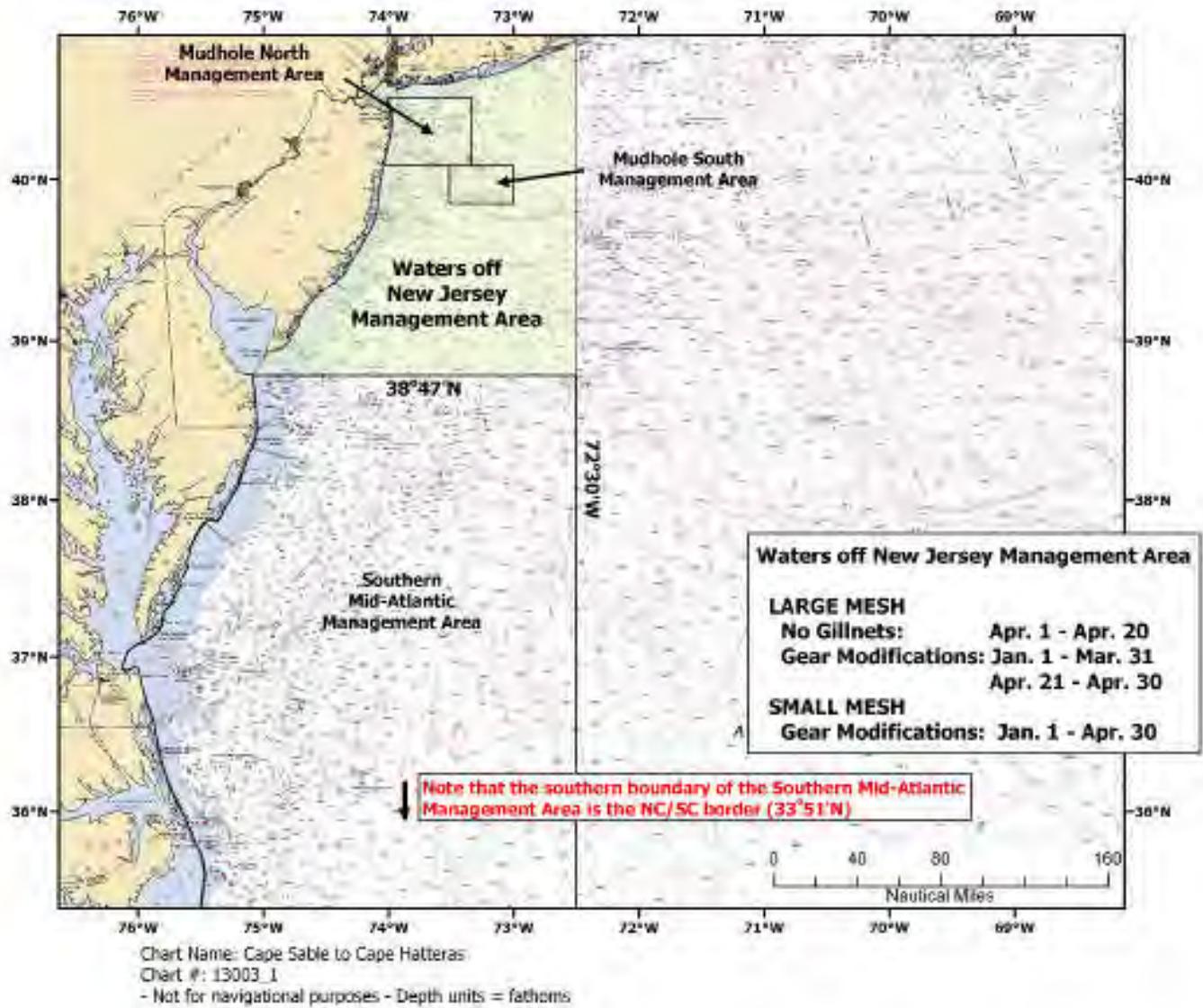
Floatline length:	No longer than 4,800 feet
Twine Size:	At least 0.90mm in diameter
Tie Downs:	Required and spaced no more than 24 ft apart along the floatline, and each tie-down is not more than 48 inches in length from the point where it connects to the floatline to the point where it connects to the lead line.
Net Size:	No longer than 300 feet in length
Net Number:	No more than 80 nets per vessel
Nets in a String:	No more than 16 net panels per string

Small Mesh Gillnet Gear (>5 inches - <7 inches)

Jan. 1 through April 30 **Gear Modification Requirements:**

Floatline length:	No longer than 3,000 feet
Twine Size:	At least 0.81mm in diameter
Tie Downs:	Prohibited
Net Size:	No longer than 300 feet in length
Net Number:	No more than 45 nets per vessel
Nets in a String:	No more than 10 net panels per string

Figure 1: Waters off New Jersey Management Area





Southern Mid-Atlantic Management Area

Large Mesh Gillnet Gear (7 - 18 inches)

Feb. 15 through Mar. 15 **Closed (No Large Mesh Gillnets)**

Feb. 1 through Feb. 14;
Mar. 16 through April 30 **Gear Modification Requirements:**

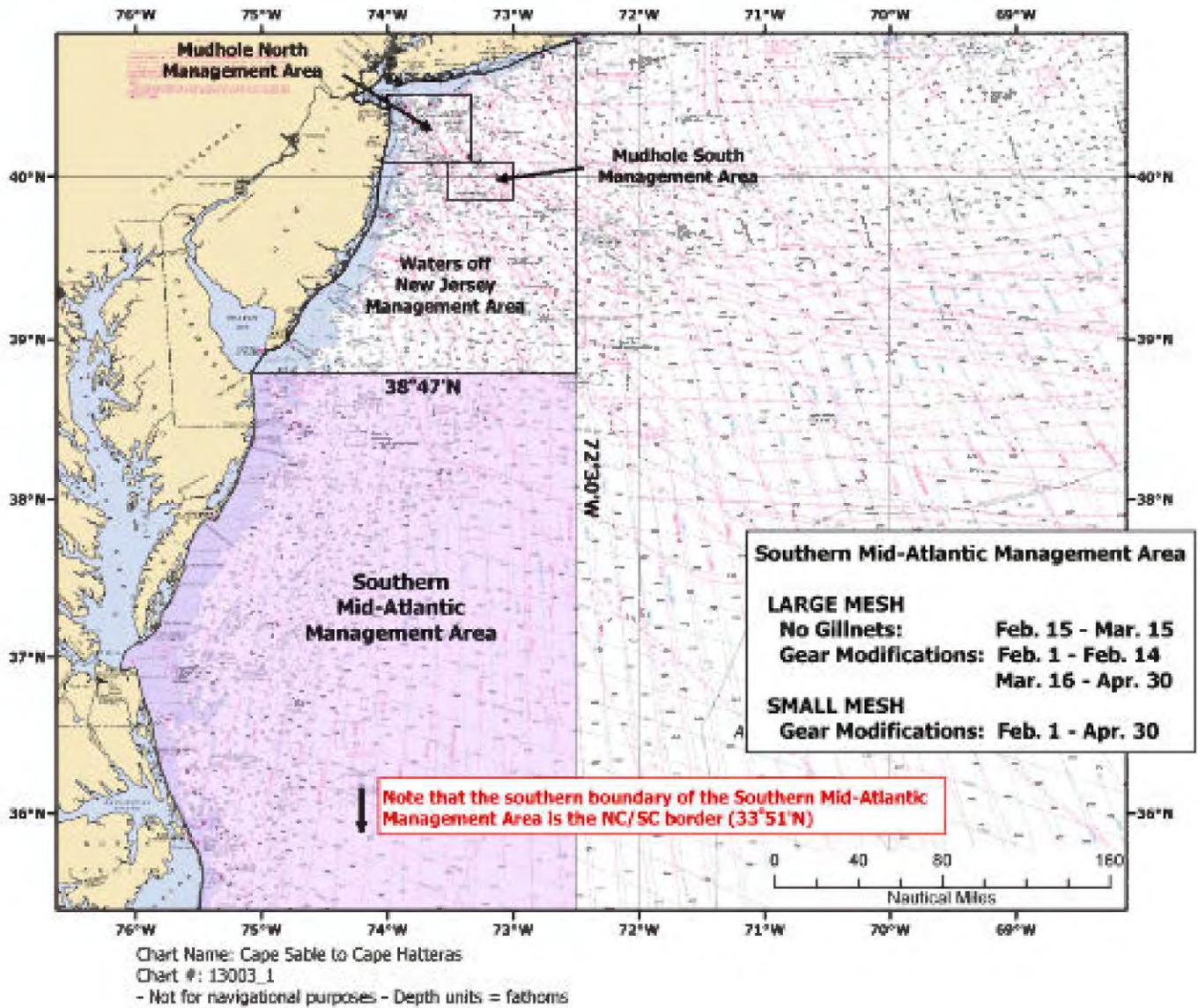
Floatline length:	No longer than 3,900 feet
Twine Size:	At least 0.90mm in diameter
Tie Downs:	Required and spaced not more than 24 ft apart along the float line, and each tie-down is not more than 48 inches in length from the point where it connects to the floatline to the point where it connects to the lead line.
Net Size:	No longer than 300 feet in length
Net Number:	No more than 80 nets per vessel
Nets in a String:	No more than 13 net panels per string

Small Mesh Gillnet Gear (>5 inches - <7 inches)

Feb. 1 through April 30 **Gear Modification Requirements:**

Floatline length:	No longer than 2,118 feet
Twine Size:	At least 0.81mm in diameter
Tie Downs:	Prohibited
Net Size:	No longer than 300 feet in length
Net Number:	No more than 45 nets per vessel
Nets in a String:	No more than 7 net panels per string

Figure 2: Southern Mid-Atlantic Management Area





Mudhole North Management Area

Large Mesh Gillnet Gear (7 - 18 inches)

Feb. 15 through Mar. 15; **Closed (No Large Mesh Gillnets)**
 April 1 through April 20

Jan. 1 through Feb. 14; **Gear Modification Requirements:**
 Mar. 16 through Mar. 31;
 April 21 through April 30

Floatline length:	No longer than 3,900 feet
Twine Size:	At least 0.90mm in diameter
Tie Downs:	Required and spaced not more than 24 ft apart along the float line, and each tie-down is not more than 48 inches in length from the point where it connects to the floatline to the point where it connects to the lead line.
Net Size:	No longer than 300 feet in length
Net Number:	No more than 80 nets per vessel
Nets in a String:	No more than 13 net panels per string

Small Mesh Gillnet Gear (>5 inches - <7 inches)

Feb. 15 through Mar. 15 **Closed (No Small Mesh Gillnets)**

Jan. 1 through Feb. 14; **Gear Modification Requirements:**
 Mar. 16 through April 30

Floatline length:	No longer than 3,000 feet
Twine Size:	At least 0.81mm in diameter
Tie Downs:	Prohibited
Net Size:	No longer than 300 feet in length
Net Number:	No more than 45 nets per vessel
Nets in a String:	No more than 10 net panels per string

Figure 3: Mudhole North Management Area

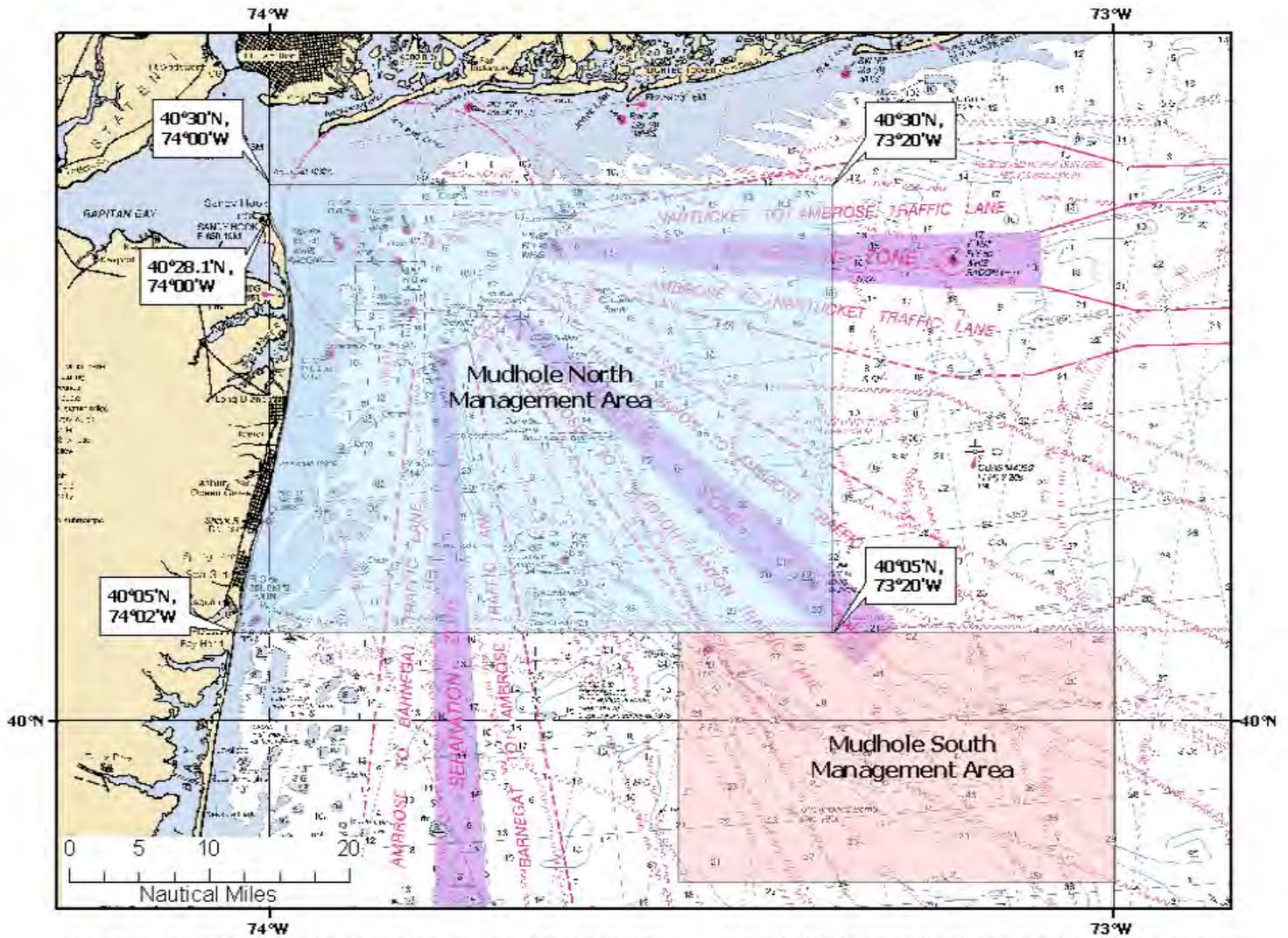


Chart Name: NY Approaches - Nantucket Shoals to Five Fathom Bank (Chart #: 12300_1) - Not for navigational purposes - Depth units = fathoms

Mudhole North Management Area

Large Mesh Gillnet Gear (7 - 18 inches)

Closed (No Large Mesh Gillnets)
Feb. 15 through Mar. 15;
April 1 through April 20

Gear Modification Requirements:
Jan. 1 through Feb. 14;
Mar. 16 through March 31;
April 21 through April 30

Mudhole North Management Area

Small Mesh Gillnet Gear (>5 - <7 inches)

Closed (No Small Mesh Gillnets)
Feb. 15 through Mar. 15;

Gear Modification Requirements:
Jan. 1 through Feb. 14;
Mar. 16 through April 30



Mudhole South Management Area

Large Mesh Gillnet Gear (7 - 18 inches)

Feb. 1 through Mar. 15; **Closed (No Large Mesh Gillnets)**
 April 1 through April 20

Jan. 1 through Jan. 31; **Gear Modification Requirements:**
 Mar. 16 through Mar. 31;
 April 21 through April 30

Floatline length:	No longer than 3,900 feet
Twine Size:	At least 0.90mm in diameter
Tie Downs:	Required and spaced not more than 24 ft apart along the float line, and each tie-down is not more than 48 inches in length from the point where it connects to the floatline to the point where it connects to the lead line.
Net Size:	No longer than 300 feet in length
Net Number:	No more than 80 nets per vessel
Nets in a String:	No more than 13 net panels per string

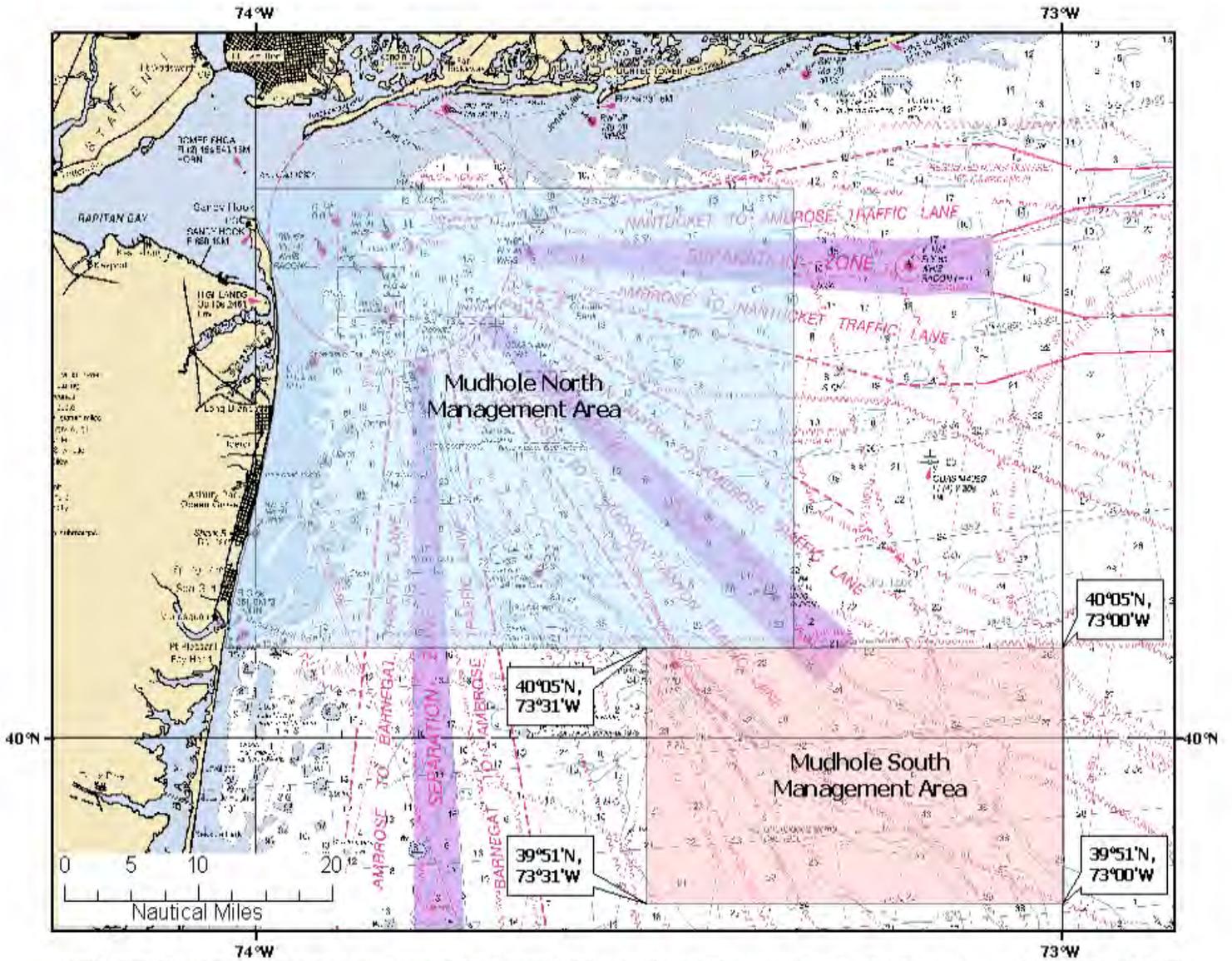
Small Mesh Gillnet Gear (>5 inches - <7 inches)

Feb. 1 through Mar. 15 **Closed (No Small Mesh Gillnets)**

Jan. 1 through Jan. 31; **Gear Modification Requirements:**
 Mar. 16 through Apr. 30

Floatline length:	No longer than 3,000 feet
Twine Size:	At least 0.81mm in diameter
Tie Downs:	Prohibited
Net Size:	No longer than 300 feet in length
Net Number:	No more than 45 nets per vessel
Nets in a String:	No more than 10 net panels per string

Figure 4: Mudhole South Management Area



Mudhole South Management Area
Large Mesh Gillnet Gear (7 - 18 inches)
 Closed (No Large Mesh Gillnets)
 Feb. 1 through Mar. 15;
 April 1 through April 20
 Gear Modification Requirements:
 Jan. 1 through Jan. 31;
 Mar. 16 through March 31;
 April 21 through April 30

Mudhole South Management Area
Small Mesh Gillnet Gear (>5 - <7 inches)
 Closed (No Small Mesh Gillnets)
 Feb. 1 through Mar. 15;
 Gear Modification Requirements:
 Jan. 1 through Jan. 31;
 Mar. 16 through April 30