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Title 50 –Wildlife and Fisheries

Chapter VI –Fishery Conservation and Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce

Part 648 –Fisheries of the Northeastern United States

Subpart F –Management Measures for the NE Multispecies and Monkfish Fisheries

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Source: 61 FR 34968, July 3, 1996, unless otherwise noted.

Editorial Note: Nomenclature changes to part 648 appear at 62 FR 14651, Mar. 27, 1997.

§ 648.84 Gear-marking requirements and gear restrictions.

- (a) Bottom-tending fixed gear, including, but not limited to, gillnets and longlines designed for, capable of, or fishing for NE multispecies or monkfish, must have the name of the owner or vessel or the official number of that vessel permanently affixed to any buoys, gillnets, longlines, or other appropriate gear so that the name of the owner or vessel or the official number of the vessel is visible on the surface of the water.
- (b) Bottom-tending fixed gear, including, but not limited to gillnets or longline gear, must be marked so that the westernmost end (measuring the half compass circle from magnetic south through west to, and including, north) of the gear displays a standard 12-inch (30.5-cm) tetrahedral corner radar reflector and a pennant positioned on a staff at least 6 ft (1.8 m) above the buoy. The easternmost end (meaning the half compass circle from magnetic north through east to, and including, south) of the gear need display only the standard 12-inch (30.5-cm) tetrahedral radar reflector positioned in the same way.
- (c) Continuous gillnets must not exceed 6,600 ft (2,011.7 m) between the end buoys.
- (d) In the GOM and GB regulated mesh area specified in § 648.80(a), gillnet gear set in an irregular pattern or in any way that deviates more than 30° from the original course of the set must be marked at the extremity of the deviation with an additional marker, which must display two or more visible streamers and may either be attached to or independent of the gear.
- (e) **Rope separator trawl.** A rope separator trawl is defined as a four-seam bottom trawl net (i.e., a net with a top and bottom panel and two side panels) modified to include both a horizontal separator panel and an escape opening in the bottom belly of the net below the separator panel, as further specified in paragraphs (e)(1) through (3) of this section.
 - (1) **Mesh size.** The minimum mesh size applied throughout the body and extension of a rope separator trawl must be 6-inch (15.2-cm) diamond mesh or 6.5-inch (16.5-cm) square mesh, or any combination thereof. Mesh in the bottom belly of the net must be 13-inch (33-cm) diamond mesh. Unless otherwise specified in this part, the codend mesh size must be consistent with mesh size requirements specified in § 648.80. The mesh size of a particular section of the rope separator trawl is measured in accordance with § 648.80(f)(2), unless insufficient numbers of mesh exist, in which case the maximum total number of meshes in the section will be measured (between 2 and 20 meshes).

- (2) **Separator panel.** The separator panel must consist of parallel lines made of fiber rope, the ends of which are attached to each side of the net starting at the forward edge of the square of the net and running aft toward the extension of the net. The leading rope must be attached to the side panel at a point at least $\frac{1}{3}$ of the number of meshes of the side panel above the lower gore, and the panel of ropes shall slope downward toward the extension of the net. For example, if the side panel of the net is 42 meshes tall, the leading rope must be attached at least 14 meshes above the lower gore. The forward $\frac{2}{3}$ of the separator ropes that comprise the separator panel must be no farther than 26 inches (66 cm) apart, with the after $\frac{1}{3}$ of the separator ropes that comprise the separator panel being no farther than 13 inches (33 cm) apart. The ends of the aftermost rope shall be attached to the bottom belly at a point $\frac{1}{6}$ of the number of meshes of the after end of the bottom belly below the lower gore. The separator ropes should be of sufficient length not to impinge upon the overall shape of the net without being too long to compromise the selectivity of the net. The separator ropes may not be manipulated in any way that would inhibit the selectivity of the net by causing the separator ropes to dip toward the bottom belly of the net and obscure the escape opening, as defined in paragraph (e)(3) of this section.
 - (3) **Escape opening.** The escape opening must be positioned in the bottom belly of the net behind the sweep and terminate under the separator panel, as described in paragraph (e)(2) of this section. Longitudinal lines may be used to maintain the shape of the escape opening, as necessary. The escape opening shall be at least 18 meshes in both length and width.
- (f) **Large-mesh belly panel trawl.** A large-mesh belly panel trawl is defined as a four-seam bottom trawl net (i.e., a net with a top and bottom panel and two side panels) modified to include a large-mesh panel to replace the first bottom belly, as further specified in paragraphs (f)(1) through (3) of this section.
- (1) **Mesh size.** The minimum mesh size applied throughout the body of the trawl, as well as the codend mesh size, must be consistent with mesh size requirements specified in § 648.80. If a vessel is fishing in an exemption area or an exempted fishery, it must comply with all of the requirements and conditions of the exemption.
 - (2) **Large-mesh belly panel.** The large-mesh belly panel must have a minimum mesh size of 30 in (76.2 cm) measured using the standard defined in § 648.80(f)(2). The owner or operator of a fishing vessel shall not use any mesh construction, mesh configuration, or other means on, in, or attached to the regulated portion of the net, as defined in this paragraph (f)(2), if it obstructs or constricts the meshes of the net in any manner. The width of the panel must extend the full width of the bottom panel (i.e., from one bottom gore to the other bottom gore). To determine the width of the large-mesh panel please see the explanation, and example provided below. The depth must be at least 90 in (228.6 cm) and at least three meshes deep (two meshes deep with a 15-in (38.1-cm) sewing seam on top and bottom). No more than six meshes of the small-mesh net may be left behind the sweep, before the large-mesh panel is sewn in.
 - (3) **Determining panel width example.** Assume the large-mesh twine is 30 in (76.2 cm) knot center to knot center (KKFM), two meshes deep with a 15-in (38.1-cm) sewing seam on the top and bottom. In most cases, the existing first bottom-belly twine sizes are 12 cm (4.7 in) KKFM and 16 cm (6.3 in) KKFM yielding ratios of 20:3 and 5:1, respectively. Therefore, to determine the required width of large mesh panel, take the number of meshes of the existing belly and divide by the ratio. If the existing twine is 16 cm (6.3 in) KKFM, and the belly, six meshes behind the sweep is 150 meshes wide, you would divide 150 by 5:1 to get the width of the large-mesh panel, 30 meshes.

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