

## Northeast Sink Gillnet Fishery

**Fishing gear type:** Gillnet

**Current category:** Category I\*

**Basis for current classification on the LOF:** The annual mortality and serious injury to harbor porpoises (Gulf of Maine/Bay of Fundy [GME/BF] stock), humpback whales (Gulf of Maine stock), minke whales (Canadian East Coast stock), and North Atlantic right whales (Western North Atlantic [WNA] stock) in this fishery exceeds 50% of each stock's Potential Biological Removal (PBR) level.

**Current list of marine mammal species/stocks injured/killed (a <sup>(1)</sup> indicates those stocks driving the fishery's classification):** Bottlenose dolphin, WNA offshore; Common dolphin, WNA; Fin whale, WNA; Gray seal, WNA; Harbor porpoise, GME/BF<sup>(1)</sup>; Harbor seal, WNA; Harp seal, WNA; Hooded seal, WNA; Humpback whale, GME; Minke whale, Canadian East Coast; North Atlantic right whale, WNA; Risso's dolphin, WNA; White-sided dolphin, WNA.

**Estimated number of current participants:** 7,712

**Take Reduction Teams/Plans that affect this fishery:** Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP), 50 CFR 229.32; Harbor Porpoise Take Reduction Plan (HPTRP), 50 CFR 229.33-34.

**Year added to the LOF:** 1996

**Category when originally listed:** Category I

**Basis for original classification on the LOF:** This fishery was categorized as a Category I based on observer data showing the annual estimated incidental mortality and serious injury from 1990-1993 of Atlantic white-sided dolphins was 102 animals/year, or 81.6% of PBR (PBR=125), and mortality and serious injury of harbor porpoise was 1,875 animals/year, which exceeded PBR (PBR=403).

**Estimated number of participants when originally listed:** 341

**Past names, if any:** "New England multispecies sink gillnet (including species as defined in the Multispecies Fisheries Management Plan and spiny dogfish and monkfish)" 1992-1997. "Northeast multispecies sink gillnet (including species as defined in the Multispecies Fisheries Management Plan and spiny dogfish and monkfish)" 1997-1999.

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**Gear description/method for fishing:** This fishery uses sink gillnet gear, which is anchored gillnet (bottom-tending net) fished in the lower one-third of the water column. The dominant material is monofilament twine with stretched mesh sizes from 6-12 in (15-30.5 cm) and string lengths from 600-10,500 ft (183-3,200 m), depending on the target species. The mesh size and string length vary by the primary fish species targeted for catch.

**Target species:** Atlantic cod, haddock, pollock, yellowtail flounder, winter flounder, witch flounder, American plaice, windowpane flounder, spiny dogfish, monkfish, silver hake, red hake, white hake, ocean pout, skate spp, mackerel, redfish, and shad.

**Spatial/temporal distribution of effort:** The fishery operates from the U.S.-Canada border to Long Island, New York, at 72° 30'W. long. south to 36° 33.03'N. lat. (corresponding with the Virginia-North Carolina border) and east to the eastern edge of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), including the Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank, and Southern New England, and excluding Long Island Sound and other waters where gillnet fisheries are listed as

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\* The fishery is classified based on mortalities and serious injuries of a marine mammal stock greater than 50% (Category I) of the stock's Potential Biological Removal (PBR) level.

Category II and III. At this time, these Category II and III fisheries include: the Northeast anchored float gillnet; Northeast drift gillnet; Long Island Sound inshore gillnet; and RI, southern MA (to Monomoy Island), and NY Bight (Raritan and Lower NY Bays) inshore gillnet. Fishing effort occurs year-round, peaking from May-July primarily on continental shelf regions in depths from 30-750 ft (9-228.6 m), with some nets deeper than 800 ft (244 m).

**Levels of observer coverage each year<sup>†</sup>:** During the period 1990-2007, estimated observer coverage (number of trips observed/total commercial trips reported) for Northeast sink gillnet, Northeast anchored float gillnet, and Northeast driftnet fisheries was 1%, 6%, 7%, 5%, 7%, 5%, 4%, 6%, 5%, 6%, 6%, 4%, 2%, 3%, 6%, 7%, 4%, and 7%, respectively.

**Management and regulations:** This fishery is managed by several interstate and federal FMPs

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### **History of Changes on the LOF**

#### 2011 LOF:

- Updated the fishery description to update the FMPs applicable to the fishery, stating “This fishery is... managed by several interstate and federal FMPs.”
- Estimated number of participants updated from 341 to 7,712. This estimation may be an inflation of actual effort; however, it represents the potential effort for the fishery, given the multiple gear types several state permits may allow for.

2010 LOF: Removed superscript "1" after minke whale (Canadian east coast), humpback whale (GOM), and North Atlantic right whale (WNA) because these stocks are not driving the Category I classification of this fishery. No serious injuries or mortalities of minke whales were reported from 2001-2006. Annual mortality and serious injury for humpback whales in all gillnet fisheries is 0.2 (PBR = 1.1), or 18% of PBR. The level of serious injury and mortality in the Northeast sink gillnet fishery is unknown, but is likely less than 50% of the stock's PBR. There was one mortality of a right whale in gillnet gear from 2001-2006; however, NMFS was unable to determine which specific gillnet fishery was responsible for the interactions. NMFS retained these stocks on the LOF given that they have been known to interact with gillnet gear.

2009 LOF: Clarified and corrected the boundary definition for effort in this fishery by fixing a typographical error by removing, “...excluding Long Island Sound or other waters where gillnet fisheries are listed as Category III. At this time, these Category II and II fisheries include...” with “...excluding Long Island Sound and other waters where gillnet fisheries are listed as Category II or III. At this time, these Category II and III fisheries include...”

2008 LOF: Changed the name of the stock of humpback whales interacting with this fishery from “WNA” to “Gulf of Maine” to reflect the interactions taking place between this fishery and the Gulf of Maine feeding stock of humpback whales. The Gulf of Maine stock was classified as a separate feeding stock and reported as such in the 2000 Stock Assessment Report (SAR).

#### 2007 LOF:

- Reworded the description of fishery to align better with management boundaries under the ALWTRP: Removed "...from the Maine/Canada border through the waters east of 72° 30'W..." and replaced with "...from the U.S./Canada border to Long Island, NY, at 72° 30'W. long. south to 36° 33.03'N. lat. and east to the eastern edge of the EEZ..."
- Clarified the list of target species to include, but not be limited to, all species included in the Multispecies FMP plus spiny dogfish, monkfish, shad, skate, and mackerel.

2006 LOF: Added superscript “1” in Table 2 after harbor porpoise (GME/BF), humpback whale (Gulf of Maine), minke whale (Canadian East Coast), and North Atlantic right whales (WNA), indicating that these stocks are driving the categorization of this fishery.

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<sup>†</sup> Observer coverage levels include the latest information reported in the most current final Stock Assessment Report (SAR).

#### 2005 LOF:

- Added Risso's dolphins (WNA) and hooded seals (WNA) to the list of species/stock killed/injured in this fishery based on interactions documented in recent SARs.
- Deleted spotted dolphins (WNA), killer whales (WNA), and false killer whales (WNA) from the list of species/stock killed/injured in this fishery because interactions had not been documented in recent years.

#### 2001 LOF:

- Shad added as a target species in this fishery as a result of the deletion of the "Gulf of Maine, Southeast U.S. Atlantic Coastal shad, sturgeon fishery" from the LOF.
- Language added to clarify the current geographic boundaries of the fishery: The fishery continues to include all fishing with sink gillnet gear (anchored gillnet gear fished in the lower third of the water column), regardless of target species, from U.S.-Canadian border to 72°30' W. long., and continuing south from the south shore of Long Island. This fishery does not include sink gillnet fishing occurring in the areas listed as Category III inshore gillnet fisheries."

#### 1999 LOF:

- Renamed "Northeast sink gillnet fishery" to better reflect the target species and geographic boundaries effort in this fishery, and to avoid future confusion for boundaries and species addressed in the Northeast Multispecies FMP.
- Deleted striped dolphins (WNA) from list of species/stocks killed/injured in this fishery because there were no recent documented mortalities or serious injuries..
- Clarified that certain stocks on the list of species/stocks killed/injured in this fishery were all WNA stocks: common dolphin, fin whale, spotted dolphin, false killer whale, and harp seal.

#### 1997 LOF:

- Renamed the "Northeast multispecies sink gillnet (including species as defined in the Multispecies Fisheries Management Plan and spiny dogfish and monkfish) fishery" to reflect changes in the Northeast Multispecies FMP.
- Absorbed the "Offshore monkfish bottom gillnet fishery" into this fishery for monkfish targeted in the Northeast. Those targeted in the Southeast are absorbed into the Category II "Mid-Atlantic gillnet fishery." The monkfish fishery should never have been listed separately due to location of fishing effort and the type of gear.
- The southernmost boundary of fishing effort in this fishery was N 30' W. long. to be consistent with the Multispecies FMP and to eliminate boundary overlap with North Atlantic coastal gillnet fisheries.