



## Gillnet Restrictions and Rationale for Management Measures

This summary is not a substitute for the regulations; rather it provides a broad overview of restrictions and requirements. You are strongly encouraged to read the regulations in conjunction with this information.

Under current regulations and proposed Amendment 16 measures, sectors may apply for an exemption from Northeast multispecies regulations regarding gillnet restrictions by requesting the exemption in their operations plans and providing a justification and analysis in their environmental assessments. This document provides a description of gillnet regulations from which a sector may seek an exemption and explains the need to justify such an exemption.

### I. Current Regulations

#### **DAY GILLNET VESSELS**

##### **Gillnet Block**

50 CFR 648.82(j)(1)(ii): During each fishing year, vessels must declare, and take, a total of 120 days out of the non-exempt gillnet fishery. Each period of time declared and taken must be a minimum of 7 consecutive days. At least 21 days of this time must be taken between June 1 and September 30 of each fishing year. The spawning season time out period (20 days) is credited toward the 120 days time out of the non-exempt gillnet fishery.

##### **Day Gillnet Limits**

<b>RMA</b>	<b># nets</b>	<b>Tags</b>
<b>GOM</b> § 648.80(a)(3)(iv)	100 nets total, no more than 50 roundfish nets*	2 tags/roundfish net 1 tag/flatfish net
*Can stow additional nets on vessel up to 160 total nets (on vessel and in water).		
<b>GB</b> § 648.80(a)(4)(iv)	50 nets total, any combination of roundfish and flatfish*	2 tags/net
*Can stow additional nets on vessel up to 150 total nets (on vessel and in water).		
<b>SNE</b> § 648.80(b)(2)(iv)	75 nets total, any combination of roundfish or flatfish*	2 tags/net
*Can stow additional nets on vessel up to 160 total nets (on vessel and in water).		

#### **TRIP GILLNET VESSELS**

##### **C. Trip Gillnet Requirement to Bring Gear In at End of Trip**

§ 648.82(j)(2): When fishing under a NE multispecies DAS, a Trip gillnet vessel is required to remove all gillnet gear from the water before calling out of a NE multispecies DAS. When not fishing under a NE multispecies DAS, Trip gillnet vessels may fish in an exempted fishery with gillnet gear.

## **II. Exemptions**

Gillnet restrictions serve to reduce effort and mortality, as well as to minimize “ghost fishing” and equity issues. Allocation of annual catch entitlements (ACEs) to sectors provides conservation benefits equivalent to the overall effort reduction and mortality control rationale for these measures. However, exempting vessels from gillnet restrictions could result in longer soak times or gear left untended to hold fishing ground, which could increase protected species interactions. Longer soaks could also result in groundfish mortality that is neither recorded nor applied to a sector’s ACE as untended gillnets “ghost fish.” In addition, an exemption from any of these gillnet requirements could raise equity concerns, because it could give sector gillnet vessels an advantage over non-sector vessels by granting them access to, or the ability to hold, prime fishing grounds during peak summer months. These exemptions could raise additional equity issues if increased protected species interactions or other impacts triggered management actions for the entire fishery, including non-sector vessels. Furthermore, impacts resulting from an exemption to the Trip gillnet requirement could be exacerbated by the fact that Trip gillnet vessels may fish an unlimited number of gillnets.

A sector’s ACE provides conservation benefits equivalent to the mortality control function of gillnet requirements, but not to the other functions of these measures. Therefore, to obtain an exemption from any gillnet requirements, sector operations plans and environmental assessments would need to provide justification that an exemption will not increase protected species interactions or “ghost fishing” and associated unreported mortality. Sectors would also need to address gear conflict and equity concerns raised by an exemption.