

“Ropeless” Fishing

The Massachusetts Perspective



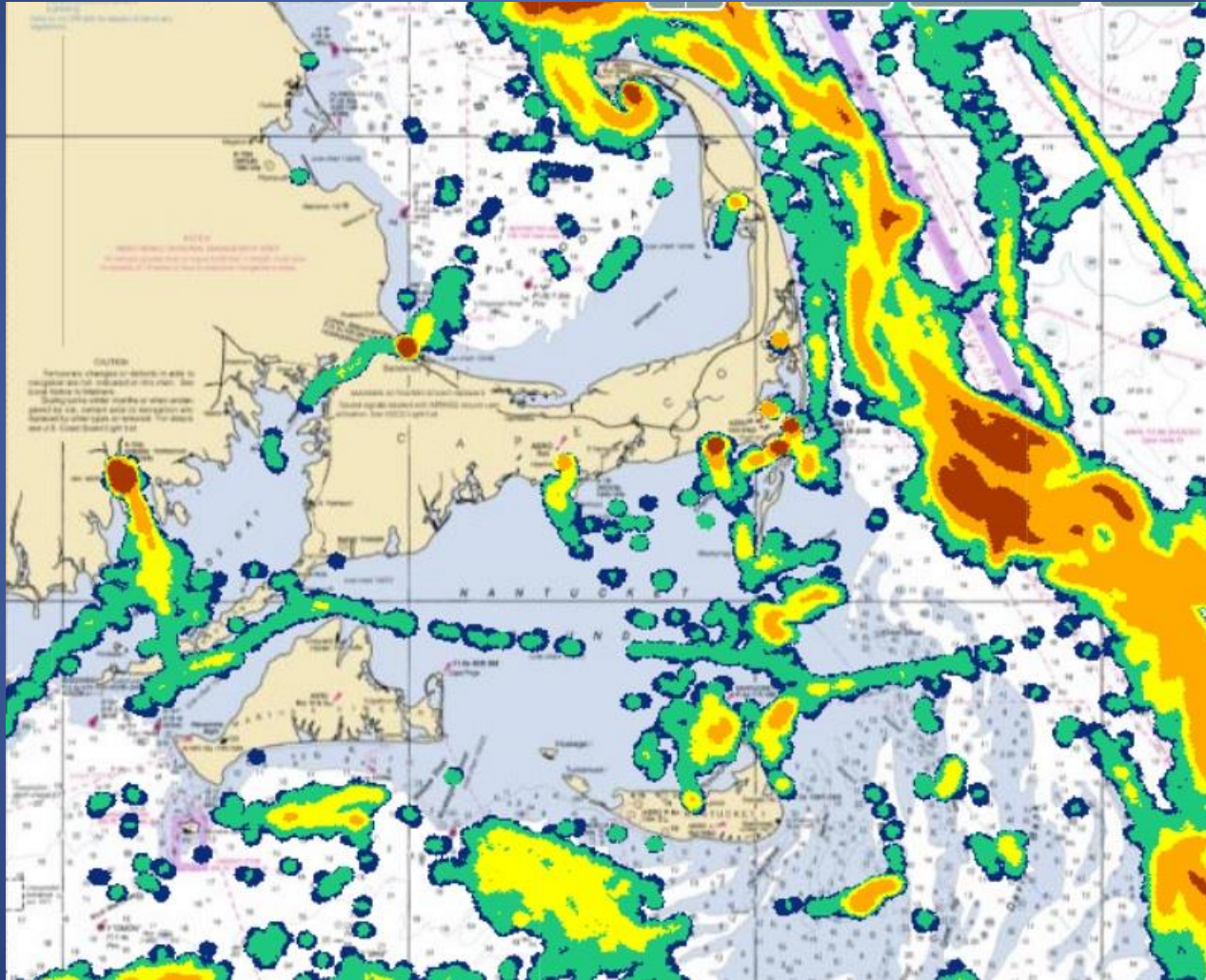
MA Statutes and Regulations

- Requirement to use vertical lines and surface system is in Code of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR 322, Section 4.13)
 - NOT a statute
- DMF can issue Letter of Authorization (LOA) to fish without vertical lines for state permitted fishermen ONLY.
- Dual and federal permitted fishermen would need an Exempted Fishery Permit from NMFS to set gear without surface system.
- The permit is only one hurdle though...

Gear Conflicts

- Massachusetts has mobile gear and fixed gear in close proximity
- Multiple users need to locate gear below the surface with high degree of accuracy.
- Lobstermen set trawls very close to one other.
- Massachusetts also has an active mobile gear fleet.
- Set-overs, gear loss, and ghost gear are a serious concern.

Northeast Data Portal



Scallop Vessel Activity 2015 and 2016, less than 4 knots

Technology

- Trigger and lift mechanism is the easy part....
- Locating traps with pinpoint accuracy is the real key component.
- Must to be able to individually ID and locate each trap
- This is necessary for enforcement and for other fixed gear and mobile gear fishermen.
- Availability and scalability of the technology is also a concern

Economics

- Serious concerns about the cost of ropeless retrieval and identification systems
- Lobster fishery is owner operator dominated
- Little capacity for financial investment
- Ropeless systems need to be financially feasible and scalable to the fishery
- 3 million lobster traps in Massachusetts and Maine

Enforcement

- Massachusetts Environmental Police need to be able to “see” each trap; view the trap/gear landscape on a broad scale.
- Strict trap limits and trap tagging in pot fisheries
- Enforcement must be able to document a serial number on each trap.
- Illegal fishing will likely morph too.



Going Forward

- In the absence of readily available trap tracking technology...how do we test ropeless fishing?
- Need to designate areas where mobile gear cannot go
- Still doesn't address the problem of other fixed gear fishermen knowing where your trawl is
- Test both the trigger and ID technology on buoyed gear??