

more than 75 nets, with two tags fixed to each net.

*Gillnet Vessels, When Fishing in the MA RMA*

Under this proposed rule, limited access NE multispecies vessels that fish under a NE multispecies DAS with gillnet gear in the MA RMA would be allowed to fish the same type and number of nets as allowed prior to the implementation of the August 1, 2002, interim rule. That is, vessels would be allowed to continue to fish up to 160 nets. Vessels fishing under the monkfish DAS program would be limited to 150 nets.

*Gillnet Vessels, When Fishing Under a Monkfish DAS*

Under this proposed rule, any monkfish vessel that has a monkfish limited access Category C or D permit (i.e., a vessel that possesses both a monkfish and NE multispecies limited access permit) and that is fishing under a monkfish DAS, in all areas, would be

restricted from fishing more than 150 nets, provided the vessel fishes with nets with a minimum mesh size of 10 inches (25.4 cm). Vessels would be required to affix one tag to each net. Category A and B monkfish vessels would be unaffected by these proposed measures.

*Large-Mesh Vessel Permit Categories*

Under this proposed rule, vessels that have a valid limited access NE multispecies Large Mesh Individual DAS category or a Large Mesh Fleet DAS category permit, when fishing in the GOM, GB, and SNE RMAs, with trawl nets or sink gillnets, would be required to fish with nets with a minimum mesh size of 8.5-inch (21.6-cm) diamond or square mesh throughout the entire net. Vessels fishing with trawl nets or sink gillnets when fishing in the MA RMA would be required to fish with nets with a minimum mesh size of 7.5-inch (19.0-cm) diamond or 8.0-inch (20.3-cm) square mesh throughout the entire net.

*Hook-gear Vessels*

Under this proposed rule, vessels that have a valid NE multispecies limited access permit would be prohibited from using de-hookers (crucifiers) with less than 6-inch (15.2-cm) spacing between the fairlead rollers. In addition, limited access Small-vessel permitted vessels and limited access permitted vessels that fish any part of a NE multispecies DAS trip in the GOM, GB or SNE RMAs would be required to use 12/0 or larger circle hooks on longline gear, and would be subject to a maximum number of rigged hooks on board the vessel. Specifically, vessels fishing in the GOM or SNE RMAs would be prohibited from possessing more than 2,000 rigged hooks, and vessels fishing in the GB RMA would be prohibited from possessing more than 3,600 rigged hooks.

Table 1 summarizes the proposed gear restriction measures for each gear sector when fishing in the various RMAs.