

**Canadian & U.S.
Lobster Fishery Sustainability Code of Conduct
Assurance Statement**

The American lobster (*Homarus americanus*) is managed for sustainability by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission in the U.S. and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in Canada.

The American lobster (*Homarus americanus*) fishery, in Canada and the United States, provides this assurance: that it adheres to a comprehensive **Sustainability Code of Conduct** – doing its part to ensure a healthy, sustainable resource and a vital fishery.

Lobster fishing is more than a way to make a living, it is a way of life. It has been intricately woven into the heritage of North Atlantic coastal communities for generations, and those who fish for lobsters are committed to securing the lobster resource for generations to come.



V-notched egg bearing lobster to be returned to the ocean.

Responsible harvesting of lobster has been a cornerstone of the fishery's conservation efforts for over 137 years. The first U.S. and Canadian laws banning the taking of egg-bearing females were instituted in the early 1870s...a conservation measure already practiced by many lobstermen at the time; and the first law regulating the minimum legal size of a lobster that could be landed was established shortly thereafter.

Given the ecological differences in various fishing areas, there is no simple management solution appropriate for every region, state, or country. When it comes to regulations, there is no "one size fits all". However, there are recognized standards, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries; and legislated conservation practices based on these standards that exemplify the lobster fishery's commitment to sustaining the lobster resource. The practices of lobstermen/women as part of today's Conservation Code of Conduct are listed on the following pages by country.



Measuring and returning an undersized lobster to the ocean.

Drafted by the:













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U.S. Lobster Fishery Conservation Code of Conduct

Each licensed commercial lobsterman/woman is required to conduct their fishing practices as follows:

-  Abide by the federal Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act – designed based on the “best available” science and outlined by the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission.
-  Abide by their state’s “V-Notch” system to protect females capable of bearing eggs (since 1872). When a berried lobster (one that is carrying eggs) is found in a trap, a “V” is notched in one of its tail fins and it is released back into the ocean. Whenever a lobster with a “V-Notch” is found in a trap it is to be released, thus protecting the brood stock.
-  Abide by their state’s regulations governing the minimum size a lobster must be before it is legal to land that lobster (since 1874). This is designed to allow lobsters to become of age to be capable of at least one reproduction cycle before it can be legally landed.
-  Abide by their state’s regulations governing the maximum size a lobster can be to be consider legal for landing. The larger, or “oversized” lobsters have a greater capacity for breeding and reproduction, thus protecting natural restocking of the resource.
-  Abide by their state’s regulations governing trap/trap tag limits per licensed lobsterman/woman, thus governing fishing effort.
-  Use traps with “escape vents” that allow sub-legal sized lobsters that come into traps an easier way to get out.
-  Use traps with a biodegradable “ghost panel”. These panels are attached with biodegradable fasteners (hog rings) that dissolve over time if a trap is lost on the bottom, thus allowing lobsters to escape and providing a large opening so that the trap does not continue to fish.
-  Abide by limited entry and apprentice program in licensing of lobster fishermen/women, thus governing effort.
-  Reduced or restricted lobster harvesting methods that may prove harmful to the environment (i.e. dragging).
-  Active participation in co-management initiatives for the fishery, including representation on the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Lobster Management Board and Lobster Conservation Management Teams as well as various councils and commissions at the state level.

References:

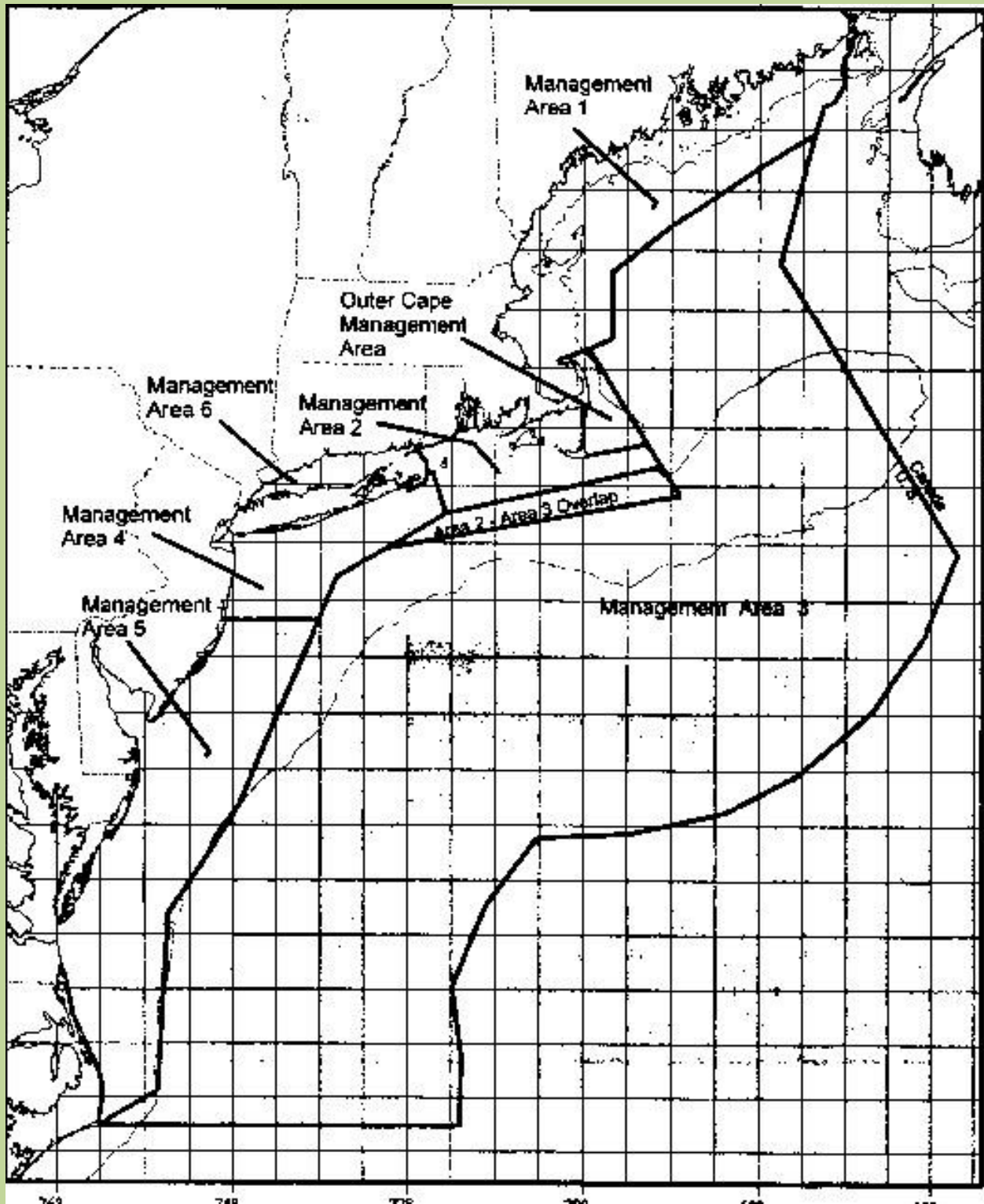
Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act.

<http://www.asmfc.org/legislation/ACFCMA.pdf>

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission’s Interstate Fishery Management Plan for American Lobster <http://www.asmfc.org/americanLobster.htm>











Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/005/v9878e/v9878e00.pdf>

Lobster Management Areas in the United States



Canadian Lobster Fishery Conservation Code of Conduct

Each licensed commercial lobsterman/woman is required to conduct their fishing practices as follows:

-  Abide by management plans put in place by Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans.
-  Recognize the division of the coastal area into 41 fishing districts – Lobster Fishing Areas (LFAs).
-  Abide by their Areas prohibition against landing egg-bearing females (since the early 1870s), thus protecting the brood stock.
-  Abide by their Area's minimum size limits a lobster must be before it is considered legal to land (first implemented in the late 1800s then re-introduced in the 1930s and 1940s). This is designed to allow lobsters to become of age to be capable of at least one reproduction cycle before it can be legally landed.
-  Abide by their Area's lath or mesh spacing requirements in traps to permit escape of small lobsters (trap selectivity first tried in the late 1940s, but effective implementation did not occur until the mid to late 1990s).
-  Abide by regulations requiring escape mechanisms on traps to reduce the retention of undersized lobsters, as well as biodegradable panels and rings to ensure that traps lost-at-sea do not continue to catch lobster and other species.
-  Abide by limited entry in licensing of harvesters (limited entry in the 1960s), thus governing fishing effort.
-  Fish only with traps – no dragging, which could prove harmful to habitat and breeding grounds.
-  Abide by their Area's limitation of the number of traps (1960s), thus governing fishing effort.
-  Recognize fishing seasons (since the early 1970s) determined by region and LFA.

References:

Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada

<http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/sustainable-durable/lobster-homard-eng.htm>

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/005/v9878e/v9878e00.pdf>

Fisheries Resource Conservation Council. 2007. Sustainability Framework for Atlantic Lobster 2007: Report to the minister of Fisheries and Oceans. Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada

Canadian Lobster Fishing Areas (LFAs)

