

Parts thereof means any part of an American lobster. A part of a lobster counts as one lobster.

Point Judith Light means the aid to navigation light located at Point Judith, RI, and defined as follows: Located at 41°21.7' N. lat., 71°28.9' W. long.; is 65 ft (19.8 m) above the water; and is shown from an octagonal tower 51 ft (15.5 m) high.

Recreational fishing means fishing that is not intended to, nor results in the barter, trade, or sale of fish.

Recreational fishing vessel means any vessel from which no fishing other than recreational fishing is conducted. Charter and head boats and commercial dive vessels are not considered recreational fishing vessels.

Regional Administrator means the Regional Administrator, Northeast Region, NMFS, or a designee.

Retain means to fail to return any species specified under §697.7 of this chapter to the sea immediately after the hook has been removed or after the species has otherwise been released from the capture gear.

Sea sampler/observer means any person required or authorized to be carried on a vessel for conservation and management purposes by regulations or permits.

Shrimp trawl net means any trawl net that is rigged for fishing and has a mesh size less than 2.50 inches (6.35 cm), as measured between the centers of opposite knots when pulled taut, and each try net, as defined in §622.2 of this chapter, that is rigged for fishing and has a headrope length longer than 16 ft (4.9 m).

Stocked Atlantic sturgeon means any Atlantic sturgeon cultured in a hatchery that is placed in rivers and ocean waters of the Atlantic Coast to enhance the Atlantic sturgeon spawning stocks.

TED means Turtle Excluder Device, which is a device designed to be installed in a trawl net forward of the codend for the purpose of excluding sea turtles from the net.

Trawl means a cone or funnel-shaped net that is towed through the water, and can include a pair trawl that is towed simultaneously by two boats.

V-notched American lobster means any female American lobster bearing a V-

shaped notch in the flipper next to and to the right of the center flipper as viewed from the rear of the lobster (underside of the lobster down and tail toward the viewer), or any female American lobster that is mutilated in a manner that could hide or obliterate such a mark.

V-shaped notch means a straight-sided triangular cut, without setal hairs, at least ¼ inch (0.64 cm) in depth and tapering to a point.

Weakfish means members of the stock or population of the species *Cynoscion regalis*, found along the Atlantic Coast from southern Florida to Massachusetts Bay.

Whole American lobster means a lobster with an intact and measurable body (tail and carapace). An American lobster with an intact and measurable body that is missing one or both claws, i.e., a cull lobster, is considered to be a whole American lobster.

(b) [Reserved]

[64 FR 68248, Dec. 6, 1999, as amended at 66 FR 8911, Feb. 5, 2001; 66 FR 14501, Mar. 13, 2001]

§ 697.3 Relation to other Federal and state laws.

(a) The provisions of sections 307 through 311 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, as amended, regarding prohibited acts, civil penalties, criminal offenses, civil forfeitures, and enforcement apply with respect to the regulations in this part, as if the regulations in this part were issued under the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

(b) The relation of this part to other laws is set forth in §600.705 of this chapter.

(c) The regulations in this part do not preempt more restrictive state laws, or state enforcement of more restrictive state laws, with respect to weakfish fishing and American lobster fishing. If a requirement of this part and a management measure required by state or local law differ, any vessel owner permitted to fish in the EEZ must comply with the more restrictive requirement or measure.

§ 697.4 Vessel permits and trap tags.

(a) *Limited access American lobster permit*. Any vessel of the United States that fishes for, possesses, or lands

American lobster in or harvested from the EEZ must have been issued and carry on board a valid Federal limited access lobster permit. This requirement does not apply to: charter, head, and commercial dive vessels that possess six or fewer American lobsters per person aboard the vessel if such lobsters are not intended for, nor used, in trade, barter or sale; recreational fishing vessels; and vessels that fish exclusively in state waters for American lobster.

(1) *Eligibility in 1999 and thereafter.* To be eligible for issuance or renewal of a Federal limited access lobster permit for fishing year 1999 and thereafter, a vessel must:

(i) Have been issued a Federal limited access lobster permit for the preceding fishing year by the last day of such fishing year unless a CPH has been issued as specified in paragraph (a)(5) of this section or unless otherwise authorized by the Regional Administrator;

(ii) Be replacing a vessel that was issued a Federal limited access lobster permit for the preceding year; or

(iii) Be replacing a vessel issued a CPH.

(2) *Qualification restriction.* Unless the Regional Administrator determines otherwise, no more than one vessel may qualify, at any one time, for a Federal limited access lobster permit based on that or another vessel's fishing and permit history. If more than one vessel owner claims eligibility for a limited access permit, based on one vessel's fishing and permit history, the Regional Administrator will determine who is eligible for the permit or a CPH under paragraph (a)(3) of this section.

(3) *Change in ownership.* The fishing and permit history, and management area designation, when required of a vessel, is presumed to transfer with the vessel whenever it is bought, sold or otherwise transferred, unless there is a written agreement, signed by the transferor/seller and transferee/buyer, or other credible written evidence, verifying that the transferor/seller is retaining the vessel's fishing and permit history, and management area designation, for the purposes of replacing the vessel.

(4) *Consolidation restriction.* Federal limited access American lobster permits, and any rights or privileges associated thereto, may not be combined or consolidated.

(5) *Confirmation of permit history.* Notwithstanding any other provisions of this part, a person who does not currently own a fishing vessel, but who has owned a qualifying vessel that has sunk, been destroyed, or transferred to another person, must apply for and receive a CPH if the fishing and permit history of such vessel has been retained lawfully by the applicant. To be eligible to obtain a CPH, the applicant must show that the qualifying vessel meets the eligibility requirements, as applicable, in this part. Issuance of a valid CPH preserves the eligibility of the applicant to apply for a limited access permit for a replacement vessel based on the qualifying vessel's fishing and permit history at a subsequent time, subject to the replacement provisions specified in this section. If fishing privileges have been assigned or allocated previously under this part, based on the qualifying vessel's fishing and permit history, the CPH also preserves such fishing privileges. A CPH must be applied for in order for the applicant to preserve the fishing rights and limited access eligibility of the qualifying vessel. An application for a CPH must be received by the Regional Administrator no later than 30 days prior to the end of the first full fishing year in which a vessel permit cannot be issued. Failure to do so is considered abandonment of the permit as described in paragraph (o) of this section. A CPH issued under this part will remain valid until the fishing and permit history preserved by the CPH is used to qualify a replacement vessel for a limited access permit. Any decision regarding the issuance of a CPH for a qualifying vessel that has been applied for or been issued previously a limited access permit is a final agency action subject to judicial review under 5 U.S.C. 704. Information requirements for the CPH application are the same as those for a limited access permit. Any request for information about the vessel on the CPH application form means the qualifying vessel that has been sunk, destroyed, or transferred. Vessel permit

applicants who have been issued a CPH and who wish to obtain a vessel permit for a replacement vessel based upon the previous vessel history may do so pursuant to paragraph (c) of this section.

(6) *Restriction on permit splitting.* A Federal limited access lobster permit will not be issued to a vessel or its replacement, or remain valid, if the vessels' permit or fishing history has been used to qualify another vessel for another Federal fishery.

(7) *Management area designations for vessels fishing with traps.* (i) For fishing year 2000 and beyond, it is unlawful for vessels issued a limited access American lobster permit fishing with traps, to retain on board, land, or possess American lobster in or from the management areas specified in §697.18, unless such fishing vessel has been issued a valid management area designation certificate or valid limited access American lobster permit specifying such management area(s).

(ii) For fishing year 2000 and beyond, each owner of a vessel which fishes with traps capable of catching American lobster, applying for a limited access American lobster permit must declare to NMFS in his/her application for a permit or permit renewal, in which management areas described in §697.18 the vessel will fish.

(iii) A lobster management area designation certificate or limited access American lobster permit shall specify in which lobster management area or areas the vessel may fish.

(iv) Once a vessel has been issued a lobster management area designation certificate or limited access American lobster permit specifying the lobster EEZ management areas in which the vessel may fish, no changes to the EEZ management areas specified may be made for such vessel for the remainder of the fishing year unless such vessel becomes a replacement vessel for another qualified vessel.

(v) A vessel issued a lobster management area designation certificate or limited access American lobster permit specifying more than one EEZ management area must abide by the most restrictive management measures in effect for any one of the specified areas, regardless of the area being fished, for the entire fishing year.

(b) *Condition.* Vessel owners who apply for a Federal limited access American lobster permit under this section must agree, as a condition of the permit, that the vessel and vessel's fishing, catch, and pertinent gear (without regard to whether such fishing occurs in the EEZ or landward of the EEZ, and without regard to where such fish or gear are possessed, taken, or landed), are subject to all requirements of this part. The vessel and all such fishing, catch, and gear shall remain subject to all applicable state or local requirements. If a requirement of this part and a management measure required by state or local law differ, any vessel owner permitted to fish in the EEZ must comply with the more restrictive requirement.

(c) *Vessel permit application.* Applicants for a Federal limited access American lobster permit under this section must submit a completed application on an appropriate form obtained from the Regional Administrator. To be complete, an application for a Federal limited access American lobster permit must contain at least the following information, and any other information specified on the application form or otherwise required by the Regional Administrator: Vessel name; owner name, mailing address, and telephone number; U.S. Coast Guard documentation number and a copy of the vessel's U.S. Coast Guard documentation or, if undocumented, state registration number and a copy of the state registration; lobster management area designation the vessel will fish in, as specified in §697.18, if fishing with traps capable of catching American lobster; home port and principal port of landing; overall length; gross tonnage; net tonnage; engine horsepower; year the vessel was built; type of construction; type of propulsion; approximate fish-hold capacity; type of fishing gear used by the vessel; number of crew; permit category; if the owner is a corporation, a copy of the Certificate of Incorporation; and the names and addresses of all shareholders owning 25 percent or more of the corporation's shares; if the owner is a partnership, a copy of the Partnership Agreement and the names and addresses of all partners; if there is more than one owner,

names of all owners having more than a 25 percent interest; and name and signature of the owner or the owner's authorized representative. The application must be signed by the owner of the vessel, or the owner's authorized representative, and be submitted to the Regional Administrator at least 30 days prior to the date on which the permit is needed by the applicant. The Regional Administrator shall notify the applicant of any deficiency in the application.

(d) *Trap tag application, lost and replacement tags.* (1) Beginning fishing year 2000, any lobster trap fished in Federal waters must have a valid Federal lobster trap tag permanently attached to the trap bridge or central cross-member, unless exempt under § 697.26.

(2) Trap tags shall be issued by the Regional Administrator, or, by state agencies, by agreement with the Regional Administrator, provided that such state tagging programs accurately identify the Federal limited access American lobster permit holder. NMFS will provide notice to American lobster permit holders as to the procedure for applying for trap tags and any required fees.

(3) Vessel owners or operators are required to report to the Regional Administrator lost, destroyed, and missing tags as soon as feasible within 7 days after the tags have been discovered lost, destroyed, or missing, by letter or fax to the Regional Administrator.

(4) Requests for replacement of lost tags in excess of the tag limit specified in § 697.19(c) must be submitted in writing to the Regional Administrator on an appropriate form obtained from the Regional Administrator and signed by the permit holder or authorized representative. The form and request for replacement tags will be reviewed by the Regional Administrator on a case-by-case basis and a decision will be reached on the number of replacement tags to be issued, if any. A check for the cost of the replacement tags must be received before tags will be re-issued.

(e) *Fees.* The Regional Administrator may charge a fee to recover the administrative expenses of issuing a permit

or trap tags required under this section. Fee amounts shall be calculated in accordance with the procedures of the NOAA Finance Handbook, available from the Regional Administrator, for determining administrative costs of each special product or service. Fees may not exceed such costs and shall be specified with each application form. The applicable fee must accompany each application; if it does not, the application will be considered incomplete for purposes of paragraph (f) of this section. Any fee paid by an insufficiently funded commercial instrument shall render any permit issued on the basis thereof null and void.

(f) *Issuance.* (1) Except as provided in subpart D of 15 CFR part 904, the Regional Administrator shall issue a permit or tags, as applicable, within 30 days of receipt of the application unless:

(i) The applicant has failed to submit a completed application. An application is complete when all requested forms, information, documentation, and fees, if applicable, have been received;

(ii) The application was not received by the Regional Administrator by any applicable deadline set forth in this section;

(iii) The applicant and applicant's vessel failed to meet all applicable eligibility requirements set forth in this section or the number of tags requested exceeds the applicable tag limit specified in § 697.19(c);

(iv) The applicant has failed to meet any other application or tag requirements stated in this part.

(2) *Incomplete applications.* Upon receipt of an incomplete or improperly executed application for any permit under this part, the Regional Administrator shall notify the applicant of the deficiency in the application. If the applicant fails to correct the deficiency within 30 days following the date of notification, the application will be considered abandoned.

(g) *Expiration.* A permit expires annually upon the renewal date specified in the permit.

(h) *Duration.* A permit will continue in effect until the renewal date unless it is revoked, suspended, or modified

Fishery Conservation and Management

§ 697.5

under 15 CFR part 904, or otherwise expires, or ownership changes, or the applicant has failed to report any change in the information on the permit application to the Regional Administrator as specified in paragraph (k) of this section.

(i) *Reissuance.* A vessel permit may be reissued by the Regional Administrator when requested in writing by the owner or authorized representative, stating the need for reissuance, the name of the vessel, and the number of the permit requested to be reissued. An application for a reissued permit is not considered a new application. The fee for a reissued permit shall be the same as for an initial permit.

(j) *Transfer.* A permit issued under this part is not transferable or assignable. A permit will be valid only for the fishing vessel, owner and/or person for which it is issued.

(k) *Change in application information.* Within 15 days after a change in the information contained in an application submitted under this section, a written notice of the change must be submitted to the Regional Administrator. If the written notice of the change in information is not received by the Regional Administrator within 15 days, the permit is void.

(l) *Alteration.* Any permit that has been altered, erased, or mutilated is invalid.

(m) *Display.* A vessel permit must be carried, at all times, on board the vessel for which it is issued and shall be subject to inspection upon request by any authorized officer. Any permit issued under this part must be maintained in legible condition.

(n) *Sanctions.* Permits issued or sought under this section may be suspended, revoked, or modified, by procedures governing enforcement-related permit sanctions and denials, found at subpart D of 15 CFR part 904.

(o) *Abandonment or voluntary relinquishment of limited access American lobster permits.* Failure to renew a limited access permit in any fishing year bars the renewal of the permit in subsequent years. If a vessel's Federal limited access American lobster permit or CPH is voluntarily relinquished to the Regional Administrator, or abandoned through failure to renew or otherwise,

no Federal limited access American lobster permit or CPH may be reissued or renewed based on the qualifying vessel's history.

(p) *Permit category change.* A vessel permit category change (for individuals who possess a dual Federal limited access permit for American lobster and black sea bass and who restrict fishing operations to Area 5) may be issued by the Regional Administrator when requested in writing by the owner or by an authorized representative of a vessel meeting the eligibility requirements under § 697.26(a).

[64 FR 68248, Dec. 6, 1999, as amended at 66 FR 14501, Mar. 13, 2001]

§ 697.5 Operator permits.

(a) *General.* Any operator of a vessel issued a Federal limited access American lobster permit under § 697.4(a), or any operator of a vessel of the United States that fishes for, possesses, or lands American lobsters, harvested in or from the EEZ must have been issued and carry on board a valid operator's permit issued under this section. This requirement does not apply to: Charter, head, and commercial dive vessels that possess six or fewer American lobsters per person aboard the vessel if said lobsters are not intended for nor used in trade, barter or sale; recreational fishing vessels; and vessels that fish exclusively in state waters for American lobster.

(b) *Operator application.* Applicants for a permit under this section must submit a completed permit application on an appropriate form obtained from the Regional Administrator. To be complete, an application must contain at least the following information, and any other information specified on the application form or otherwise required by the Regional Administrator: Name, mailing address, and telephone number; date of birth; hair color; eye color; height; weight; social security number (optional) and signature of the applicant. The applicant must also provide two recent (no more than 1 year old) color passport-size photographs. The application must be signed by the applicant and submitted to the Regional Administrator at least 30 days prior to the date on which the applicant desires to have the permit made effective. The