



January 6, 2015

MEMORANDUM FOR: MRAG Americas and
Northeast Fisheries Observer Program Observers

FROM: Amy S. Martins 
Branch Chief, Fisheries Sampling Branch (FSB)

SUBJECT: Update to Pot/Trap Sampling Strategies

There have been several recent changes to sampling strategies in the lobster and conch pot fisheries in response to observer and industry feedback. Updated strategies are summarized below and within the attached Pot/Trap ODRGs. Please discard any existing Pot/Trap ODRGs in your possession.

Lobster pot/trap

Note – observers should record a comment indicating which strategy was used on the Crustacean Log (comment should consist of S1, S2, or S3).

Strategy 1 and 2 – No change, see ODRG

Strategy 3

- Sample lobster catch from 20% of traps per trawl – or a greater percentage (i.e. 50%), be consistent within a haul.
- Obtain weights for all lobster catch (kept and discarded) by fish disposition, including lobster catch that does not fall within 20% sample. Tallies (by disposition code) may be used to estimate weight.
- Count of all lobsters caught must be recorded on the Crustacean Log each haul.
- Tallies may be obtained from the captain/crew.
- Trawls (including aggregated groups or lines of traps) must consist of 10 or more traps to use strategy 3.
- Sample (length and weight) all finfish caught on observed hauls.

Lobster and conch pot/trap - *Aggregating groups or lines of traps*

- Approved for use on inshore trips only.
- Appropriate when trawls are made up of less than 4 traps per trawl.

- Captains often fish a group or line of trawls together in a given area (see Figure 1) based on bottom type or catch history.
- Observers may group trawls of traps together based on the captain's fishing intention.
- Gear from each group should be recorded on a single pot/trap gear log and catch from each group should be recorded on a single pot/trap haul log.
- Communication is key when aggregating traps, check with the captain to determine how the gear is being fished and group the trawl or line of traps accordingly.
- Observers may use strategies 1, 2, or 3 when aggregating traps in this manner. When using strategy 2, observers may sample every other trawl of traps within the group. When using strategy 3, observers should sample 20% (or a greater percentage) of the total number of traps within the group.
- Observers should include a comment on the pot/trap gear log noting the number of trawls that were combined.

Conch pot sampling

- Separate kept and discarded catch by species and disposition.
- Ask crew to set discards aside in a basket or tote.
- If there is a large volume of undersized discarded whelk catch on a particular haul and time is short, observers may subsample the discards (see ODRG for example).
- Measurement target of 100 widths per whelk (using whelk length frequency board) species and catch disposition (k/d). Record measurements in millimeters using the length frequency log.
- Sample all finfish.

If you have any questions about the changes to lobster or conch pot sampling strategies, please contact Glenn Chamberlain at 508-405-2153 or glenn.chamberlain@noaa.gov.

Thank you for your hard work!

Attachments:

- Figure 1
- Pot/trap ODRG

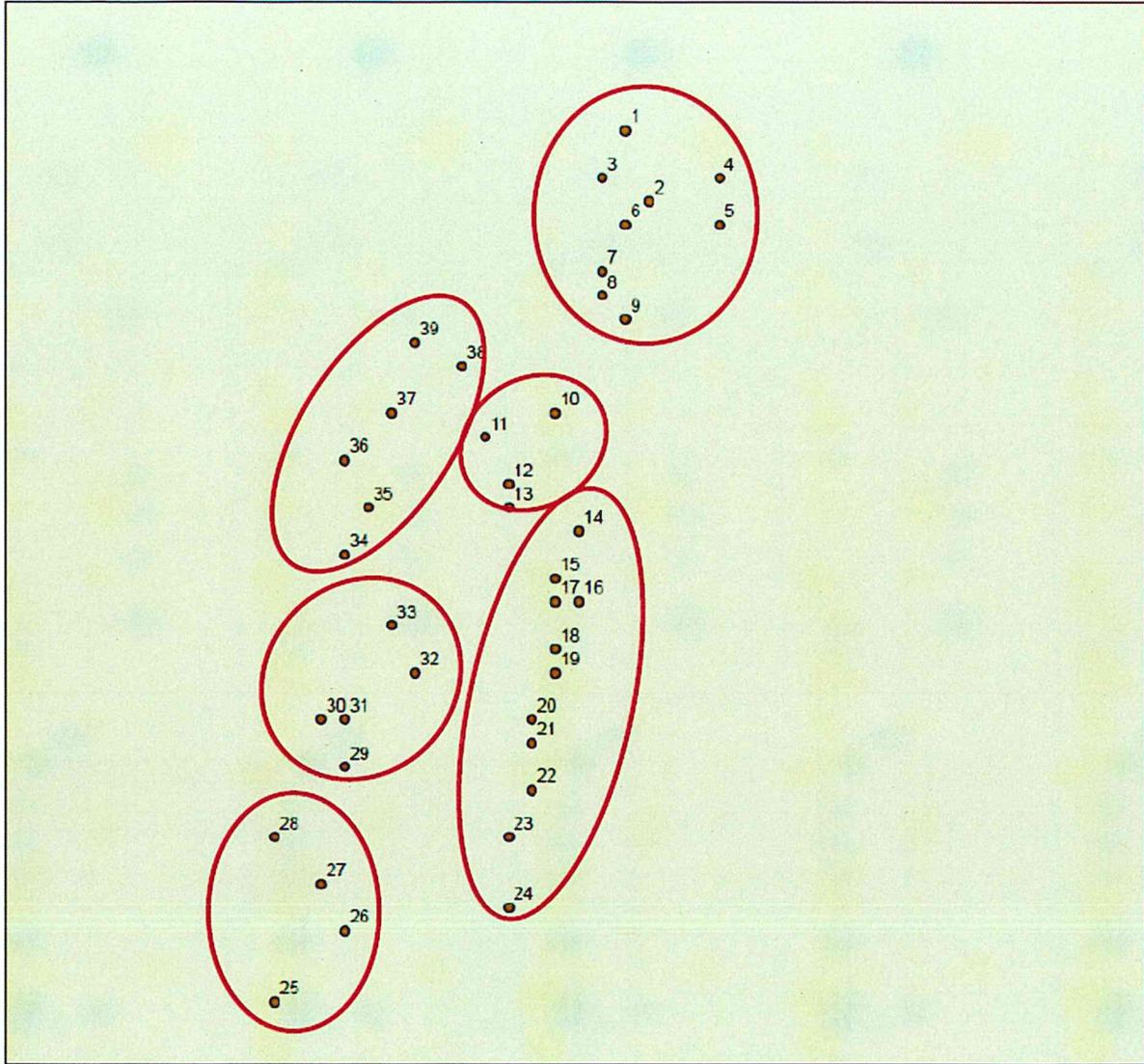


Figure 1. Example hauls from a simulated lobster trip, prior to the availability of the option to aggregate trawls of traps in the lobster and conch pot fisheries. Each point (numbered 1-39) represents an individual haul from the trip. Each red circle represents a possible aggregation of trawls, with the total being determined by the captain's intent. Note that the total number of hauls (and gears) from the trip would be reduced from 39 to 6 by aggregating. Also note that the number of trawls per gear aggregation is not consistent (ranges from 4-11 trawls per aggregation), illustrating why communication with the captain is important when grouping trawls together.