

Reps. Allen and Michaud Applaud NOAA Action to Delay Whale Entanglement Rule

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WASHINGTON, DC - Today, U.S. Representatives Tom Allen and Mike Michaud today welcomed the action by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to delay implementation of its proposed Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan in Maine coastal waters.

Implementation would have imposed severe hardship on Maine lobstermen

WASHINGTON, DC - Today, U.S. Representatives Tom Allen and Mike Michaud today welcomed the action by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to delay implementation of its proposed Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan in Maine coastal waters. Also known as the entanglement rule, it will require lobstermen to use so-called "sinking groundline" which costs an estimated \$10,000 per boat. There are also concerns about safety risks associated with the use of groundline in the rocky areas near Maine's shoreline where snagged line can damage vessels and possibly injure or kill operators. In a May 6th letter to NOAA Acting Assistant Administrator for Fisheries Dr. James W. Balsiger, Representatives Allen and Michaud had expressed their support for a request from the Maine Lobstermen's Association to delay the rule in order to resolve problems associated with its implementation and enforcement.

"This is a big win for the Maine Lobstermen's Association and for the men and women who work on Maine lobster boats and the thousands of others who supply this \$249 million industry," Representative Allen said. "I believe this delay will ultimately result in a better rule that will provide greater protection for the whales without the economic costs, safety risks and administrative burdens the proposed rule would have imposed on our lobstermen who are already suffering due to shrinking harvest and rising fuel costs. I will continue to work with NOAA, Representative Michaud and the other members of Maine's congressional delegation, Maine state officials, the Maine Lobstermen's Association and conservation groups to develop a plan that addresses everyone's concerns as soon as possible."

"I appreciate action by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to delay implementation of a previously issued rule which would force our lobstermen to use sinking groundline," Representative Michaud said. "Implementation of the sinking groundline rule will not only add to the cost of doing business, but also raises safety concerns for our lobstermen and their boats. Delaying implementation of the sinking groundline rule will allow the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to work with Maine lobstermen to address these concerns and to continue to study alternatives to sinking groundline."

