



Circular No.: SPI250901

Date: 18 September, 2025

Subject: Fishing activities in the East China Sea fully resume on 16 September 2025

Dear Sirs / Madams,

On 16 September 2025, the four-and-a-half-month summer fishing moratorium ended, and fishing in the East China Sea was fully resumed. Nearly 4,000 fishing vessels from Zhejiang Province, including single trawlers and pair trawlers, set sail collectively. Following the full resumption of fishing operations in the East China Sea, there has been a significant increase in the number of fishing vessels navigating and operating along the coastal waters of the East China Sea. Consequently, the risk of collisions between merchant vessels and fishing vessels has risen.

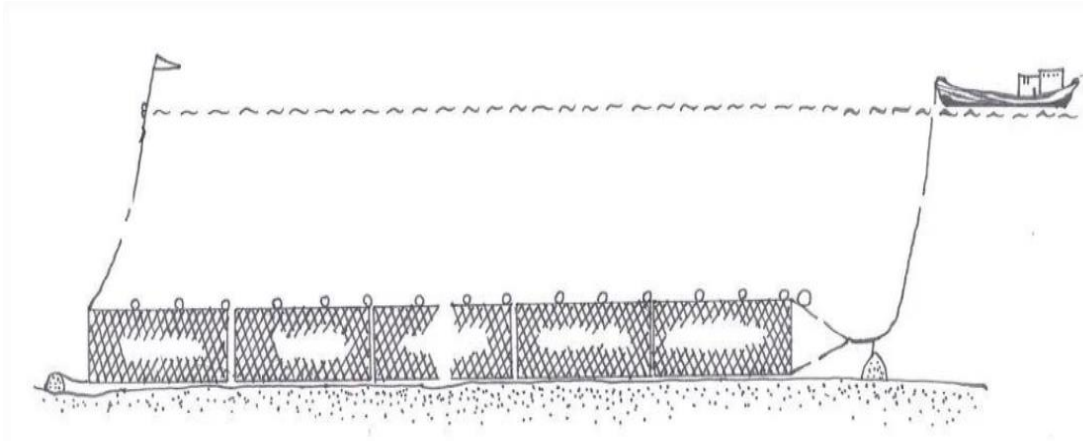
To address the heightened risks, the Zhejiang Maritime Safety Administration, in coordination with the Fisheries Administration, has launched the "2025 Escorting Fishing Season Operation." Patrol craft, aircraft, and law enforcement personnel have been deployed to strengthen control and watch-keeping, while additional measures, such as temporary route restrictions, the establishment of a dedicated "fishing protection" VTS channel, and unmanned aerial vehicle patrols, have been implemented to safeguard maritime safety.

With the full resumption of fishing operations in the East China Sea and the departure of nearly 4,000 fishing vessels, different fishing methods have resulted in varying "maritime patterns" of fishing vessels. During sea passages, it is inevitable to encounter fishing vessels engaged in fishing operations. At the time of such encounters, it is particularly important to establish communication in advance and to coordinate the manner of passing, as fishing vessels under operation are often restricted in their ability to maneuver. Accordingly, we hereby provide relevant information regarding common fishing methods employed by fishing vessels for your kind reference.

1. Gillnet Operation

Gillnet operation, also referred to as drift gillnet operation, is a passive fishing method in which swimming fish are gilled or entangled by the net. The net panels are rectangular in shape, and during operation, dozens or even hundreds of such panels are connected together, typically extending from over one nautical mile to several nautical miles. Buoys and small flags are fitted on the nets, and at night, battery-powered flashing lights are attached to the

small flagpoles at the ends of the nets. The bow of the fishing vessel is secured to one end of the drift net at the leeward side, with the vessel's bow pointing in the direction in which the net extends. The vessel and the net drift together along with the wind and current.

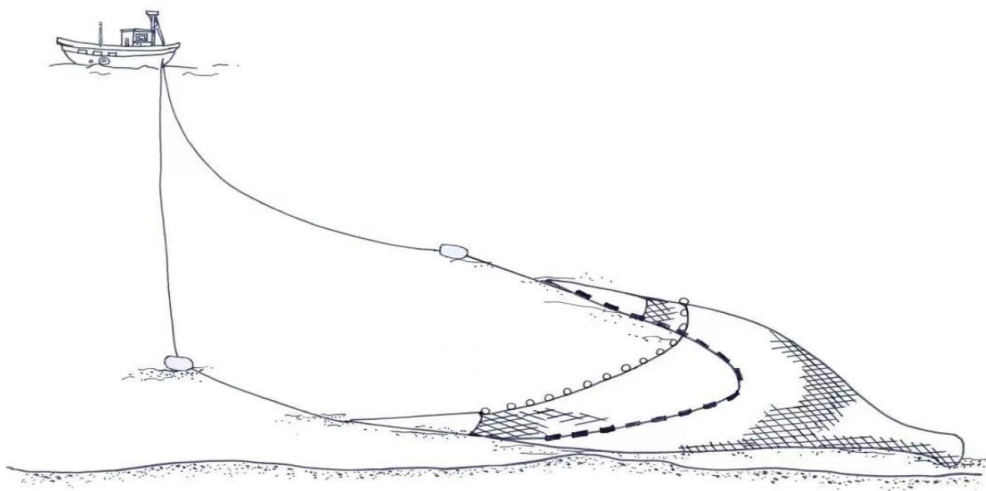


Key Points for Collision Avoidance:

When giving way to a fishing vessel engaged in drift gillnet operation, vessels should pass astern of the fishing vessel at a closest distance of not less than 0.5 nautical miles, and passing ahead of the fishing vessel at close range is strictly prohibited. When a drift gillnet vessel is setting nets, vessels must avoid passing either ahead or astern of it, and should instead maintain a closest distance of not less than 1 nautical mile and proceed on a course parallel to the direction of the drift net.

2. Single Trawler Bottom Trawling Operation

Single bottom trawling operation refers to a fishing method in which a single fishing vessel independently tows the trawl gear for catching fish. The trawling speed is generally above 4 knots and may reach up to 6 knots.

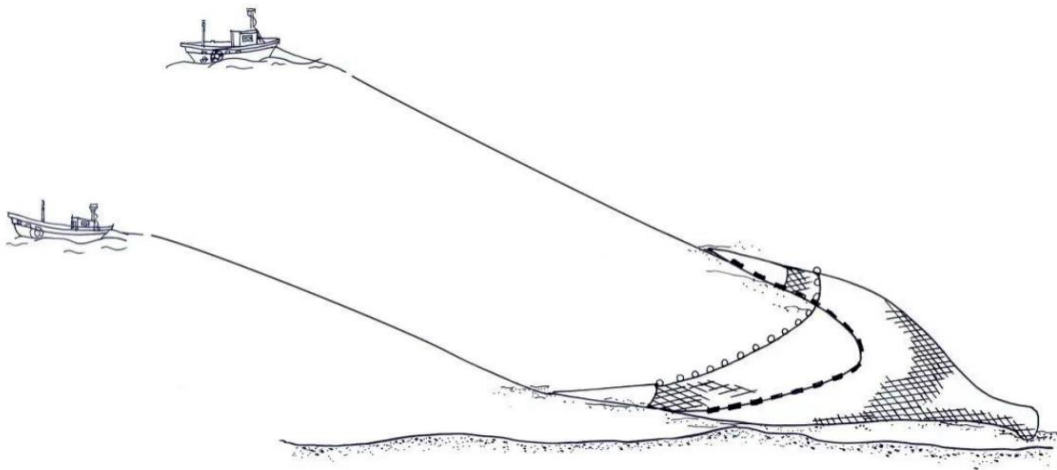


Key Points for Collision Avoidance:

For single bottom trawlers, it is considered relatively safe for vessels to remain at least 200 meters astern of the trawler. Particular attention should be paid to changes in course and speed when the trawler is shooting or hauling its nets.

3. Pair Trawlers Bottom Trawling Operation

Pair trawlers bottom trawling operation is a fishing method in which two fishing vessels, separated by a considerable distance, jointly tow a single trawl net for fishing. The trawl length is about 400–500 meters, and the gear is set at a relatively deep level in the water. Under normal weather conditions, the trawling speed is 3–4 knots. During shooting and hauling operations, deck floodlights are switched on at night, and crew members can be observed working busily on deck.

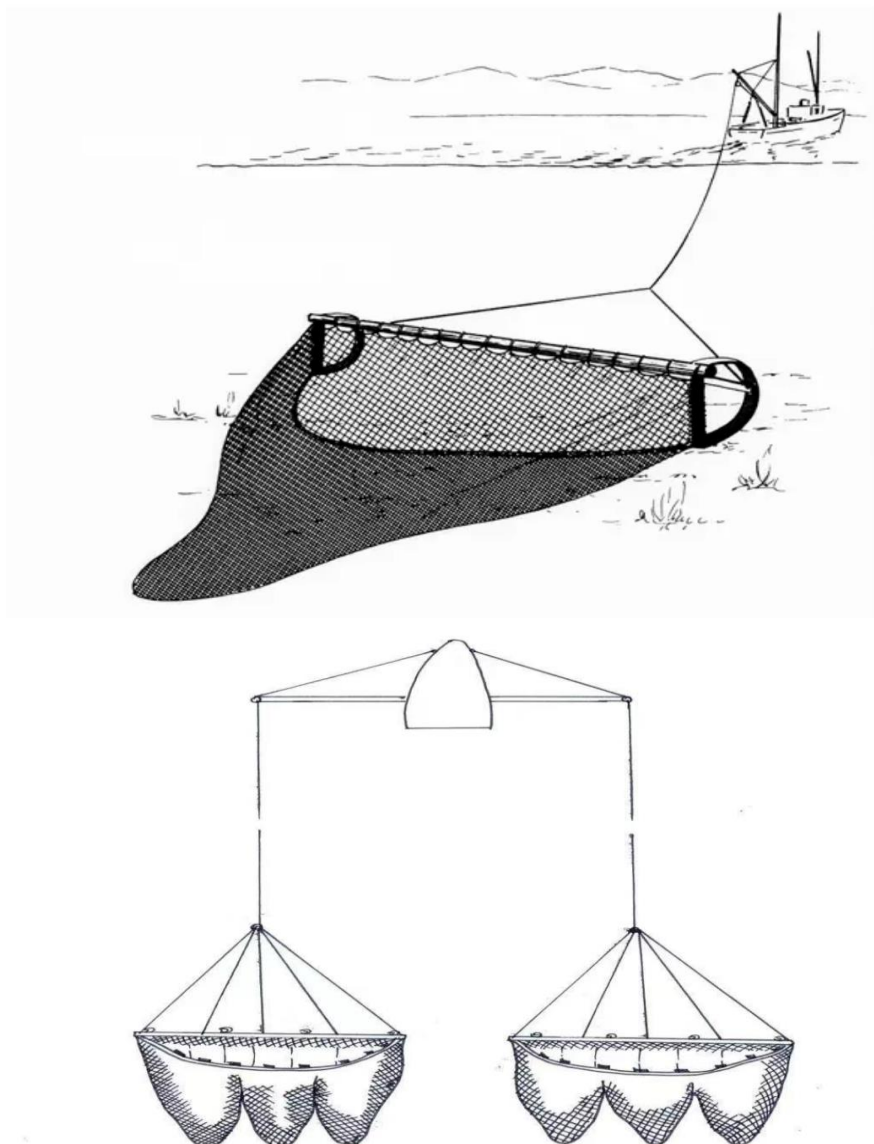


Key Points for Collision Avoidance:

For fishing vessels engaged in pair trawlers bottom trawling operation, vessels should maintain a passing distance of not less than 1 nautical mile astern, and not less than 0.5 nautical miles abeam of the outer side. Close-range passage ahead of the pair trawlers should be avoided, and passing between the two trawlers is strictly prohibited. As trawlers generally proceed at low speeds, whether to pass ahead or astern should be determined by the width of the navigable waters at the time. When passing astern, due consideration must be given to the length of the trawl (generally about 200 meters) in order to avoid fouling the net. When observing pair trawlers setting nets while proceeding in opposite directions, vessels should maintain a passing distance of not less than 0.5 nautical miles from the side where the net is being shot.

4. Beam Trawl Shrimping Operation

Beam trawl shrimping operation is a single-vessel bottom trawling method that uses a beam as a horizontal spreading device for the net. The towing speed is generally 2–3 knots. This operation is classified into single-beam and double-beam operations, as illustrated in the figure below.



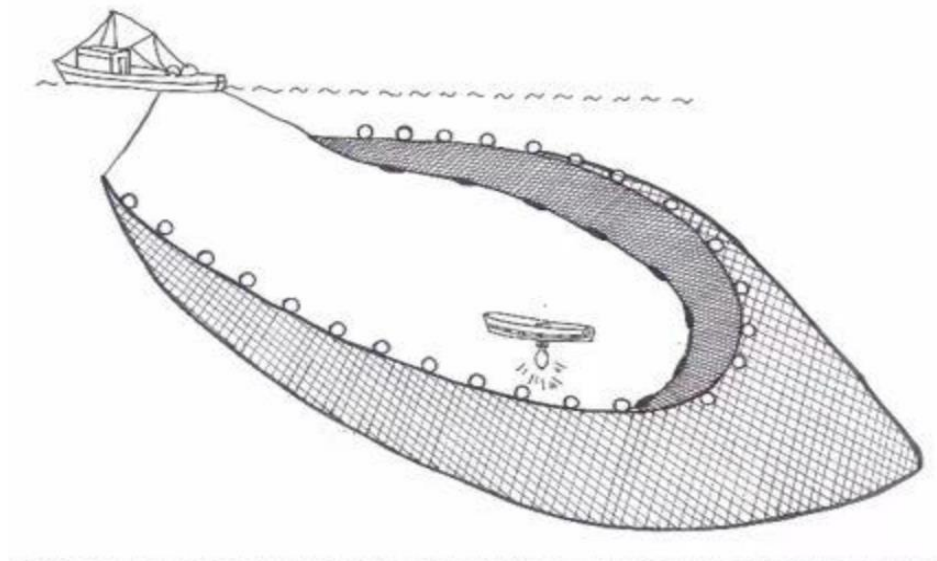
Key Points for Collision Avoidance:

When giving way to fishing vessels engaged in beam trawl shrimping operation, attention should be paid to avoiding the vessel's sides and stern. As the vessel's course and speed can

vary significantly during shooting and hauling, a passing distance of not less than 0.5 nautical miles should be maintained.

5. Purse Seine Operation

Purse seine operation is a fishing method that uses a large, long strip net to encircle a school of fish. The upper edge of the net is fitted with floats, while the lower edge is weighted with sinkers. Several fishing vessels work collaboratively, and the operation is carried out in stages, including locating the fish school, attracting fish with lights, deploying the net, and hauling it to enclose the catch.

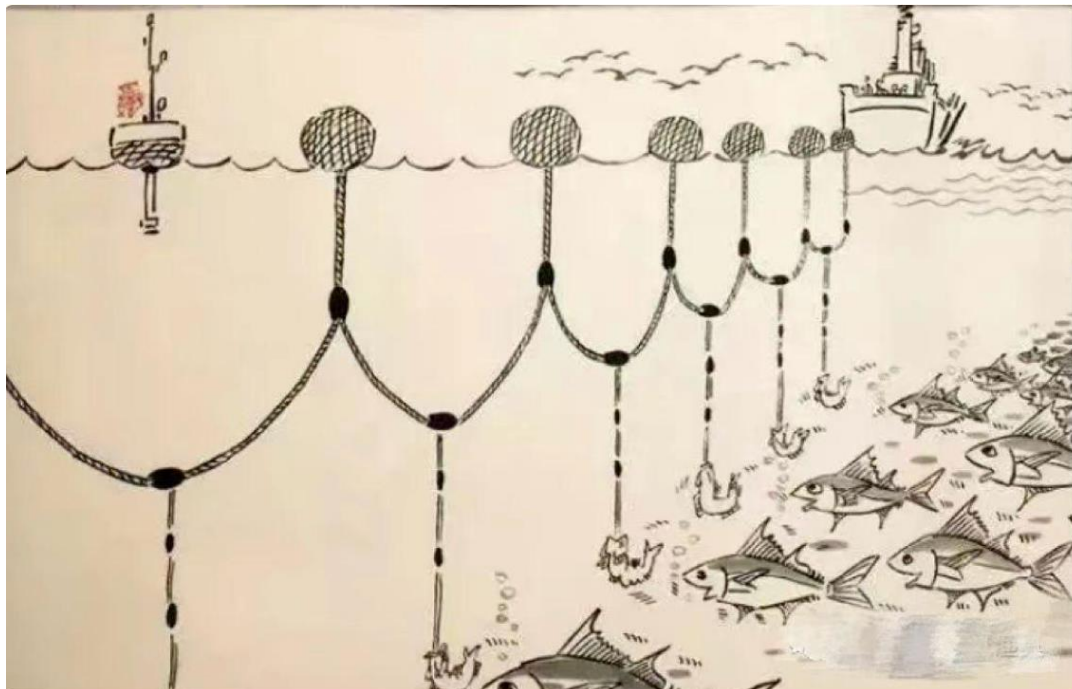


Key Points for Collision Avoidance:

When giving way to fishing vessels engaged in purse seine operation, vessels should maintain a passing distance of not less than 0.5 nautical miles from the windward side of the operation.

6. Longline Fishing Operation

Longline fishing operation uses a mainline typically ranging from one hundred meters to several hundred meters in length. Branch lines with hooks are attached at regular intervals along the mainline, and floats and sinkers are used to suspend the hooks at a predetermined depth to catch fish. One end of the longline is secured to the bow of the fishing vessel, allowing it to drift with the wind and current.



Key Points for Collision Avoidance:

When giving way to fishing vessels engaged in longline fishing operation, vessels should maintain a passing distance of not less than 0.5 nautical miles astern of the fishing vessel.

7. Setting Net Operation

Setting net operation is a common fishing method carried out by fishing vessels, primarily in waters with a depth of less than 25 meters. These nets are usually equipped with fixed frames, such as square, rectangular, trapezoidal, or triangular shapes, with bamboo being a common material for constructing the frames. Fisheries authorities designate specific set net areas, which are marked on nautical charts as “fish barriers” for identification. At sea, these set net areas are visually distinct: during slack tide, the frames may be visible above the water surface, while the floats or buoys attached to the net bags indicate their position when currents are strong.

Key Points for Collision Avoidance:

When encountering the buoys of fishing vessel with setting net operation, vessels should maintain an appropriate distance to allow the fishing vessel and its buoys to pass safely. However, in areas where a large number of fishing vessels are engaged in set net operations, avoidance may become considerably difficult. Therefore, navigating vessels are advised to avoid entering densely concentrated set net areas whenever possible.



Safety Advisory on Collision Avoidance between Merchant and Fishing Vessels

Guidelines for Merchant Vessels

- Properly arrange watchkeeping personnel on the bridge. At all times, there should be at least two officers on navigation watch and lookout personnel present.
- Inspect and test all equipment, including radar, electronic chart systems (ECDIS), AIS, VDR, VHF, navigation lights, and sound signals, to ensure they are fully operational.
- Watchkeeping personnel should enhance lookout practices, operate multiple radar units, and coordinate observations between near and far ranges.
- Do not rely excessively on a single navigational aid. Each vessel must, at all times, maintain a proper lookout using all effective means appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions, including visual and auditory observations, to make a thorough assessment of collision risk.
- During anchoring, strengthen anchor watch and establish a safe anchoring guard zone. Timely identify urgent situations and potential collision hazards, and use all available means, including sound and light signals, to warn approaching vessels, making every effort to prevent collision incidents.

Other Matters Requiring Special Attention

- The period from 2400 hours to 0400 hours is a high-risk time for collisions between merchant and fishing vessels and should receive particular attention.
- Special attention should be given to some fishing vessels at anchor during nighttime that may not be maintaining proper watch, displaying navigation lights, or operating AIS as required. Additionally, the presence of numerous fishing gear position indicators may interfere with AIS, radar echoes, and electronic chart systems.
- When observing a fishing vessel proceeding at approximately 3 knots, it is usually engaged in fishing operations and therefore restricted in maneuverability. Early coordination for avoidance is necessary, and it is advisable to maintain a passing distance of at least 1 nautical mile.
- Even minor contact between a merchant vessel and a fishing vessel can cause damage or capsizing to the fishing vessel, and such incidents may not be readily noticed by personnel on the merchant vessel. Therefore, when passing fishing vessels at close range, careful observation is required to ensure that no contact, surge damage, or suction effects occur.

Collision Avoidance Action:

Collision avoidance actions should comply with the COLREGs, and efforts should be made to communicate with fishing vessels in advance via VHF Channel 16 to coordinate actions to



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avoid collision. If repeated calls go unanswered, it may indicate that the fishing vessel's VHF is not being monitored. When communicating, attention should be paid to limitations in accents and language expression to ensure that both parties clearly understand each other's intentions.

When encountering a fishing vessel requiring urgent avoidance, at least five flashes of the daylight signal lamp and/or at least five consecutive short blasts on the whistle should be used to attract the vessel's attention. During emergency avoidance, steering alone may not suffice; engine coordination and speed reduction should also be considered. Avoidance actions must take full account of the surrounding environment to prevent creating urgent situations with other vessels.

Emergency Rescue

In the event that a collision becomes unavoidable, vessel speed should be reduced as much as possible, and direct head-on impact with the fishing vessel must be avoided. Nearby vessels should be immediately called upon to participate in rescue operations.

Following a collision, the vessel must stop immediately, prioritizing the rescue of life and making every effort to provide assistance. Until all persons in distress are safely recovered, the vessel must not abandon search and rescue or leave the scene on its own, unless doing so would seriously endanger its own safety.

The incident should be reported to the nearest competent authority through all available means without delay. The report should include information such as the position of the incident, the name of the vessels, the number of casualties, the condition of the vessels involved, weather and sea conditions, and the type of assistance required.

We hope the above will be of some assistance. If you have any further queries, please feel free to contact with us.

Yours faithfully,

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