Title: Federally Permitted Charter/Headboat Principal Ports

Data: 2025
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Prepared for:
Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC)
www.northeastoceandata.org

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Version History:
Version 1.0, September 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

These data represent federally permitted charter/headboat principal ports. The data are collected and maintained by the NOAA Greater Atlantic Region Permits Office (https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/contact/greater-atlantic-region-permits-office-0). Data were obtained from the NOAA Greater Atlantic Region Fisheries Office (GARFO) database which lists active permit holders of NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Region Vessel permits. Data from GARFO's database are provided as a summary of permit information and are advisory only. A more detailed description of each Greater Atlantic permit program can be found on the Permits website or on the Initial Vessel Permit Application and the Initial Dealer Permit Application.

Information from the GARFO database was downloaded as a CSV file. The file included an abbreviated and filtered version of the 2025 vessel permit database with permit number, vessel name, home port city, home port state, principal port city, principal port state, and species permit data. In order to display this information geospatially, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), National Geospatial Program, Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) was downloaded and used to define the location of each vessel principal port city. "Principal port" is the city and state where the majority of a permit's landings occur. The Northeast Ocean Data Portal team chose this location as the most relevant for visualization in maps of the region. The principal port

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city listed for each vessel in the GARFO database was joined with the closest matching GNIS record within the appropriate principal port state. If the precise location of the principal port city was unclear, internet searches of public vessel information were used to verify the principal port city and state (see Section 6. Data Processing for more information). The total number of federally permitted charter/headboats at each principal port was then summed and displayed using points of varying sizes and colors representing the number of vessels designating a given port as their permitted principal port location. This layer shows only vessel counts; more detailed information, including vessel-specific information such as the types of fisheries permitted, is available from the NOAA GARFO database. To obtain official permit information, contact the NOAA GARFO Permit Office (https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/contact/greater-atlantic-region-permits-office-0).

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this layer is to spatially display the number of federally permitted charter/headboats associated with each principal port using summarized 2025 NOAA GARFO permit data. Vessel principal ports were geolocated using USGS GNIS records, and port locations are symbolized by vessel counts. This layer is intended for informational and visualization purposes only and does not provide official or vessel-specific permit determinations.

3. SOURCES AND AUTHORITIES

- NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Region Vessel Commercial Permits Data Reports (2025)
- NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service - Greater Atlantic Regional Fisheries Office & Analysis and Program Support Division
- United States Geological Survey Geographic Names Information System

4. DATABASE DESIGN AND CONTENT

Feature types: Federally permitted charter/headboat principal ports

Data Dictionary:

Line	Name	Definition	Type	Size
1	FID	Automatically generated	ObjectID	*
2	Shape	Geometric representation of the feature	geometry	*
3	Feature_Name	Principal port place name, as defined in GNIS	text	120

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4	Count	Number of federally permitted charter/headboats	Numeric	
5	State_Name	Principal port state name	text	100

Feature Class Name: FederallyPermittedCharterHeadboatPrincipalPorts

Total Number of Unique Features: 289

Dataset Status: Complete

5. SPATIAL REPRESENTATION

Geometry Type: point
Reference System: Geographic Coordinate System NAD 1983
Datum: D North American 1983
Spheroid: GRS 1980

XY Resolution: XY Scale is 0.00000000104166666504979 Degree

Tolerance: 0.000000133333333126373 Degree

Geographic extent: -74.253717 to -66.984145, 45.679210 to 40.491428

IS0 19115 Topic Category: environment, oceans, commercial fishing

Place Names:

Atlantic Ocean, Boston Harbor, Buzzards Bay, Cape Cod Bay, Connecticut, Connecticut River, Gulf of Maine, Long Island Sound, Maine, Massachusetts, Massachusetts Bay, Nantucket Sound, Narragansett Bay, New Hampshire, New York, Penobscot Bay, Rhode Island

Recommended Cartographic Properties:

(Using ArcGIS ArcPro nomenclature)

Point Marker Fill: 5 point, color model with graduated symbols size range 4-12 point, outline width: 0.7 point

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6. DATA PROCESSING

Data were downloaded as a CSV file from the GARFO vessel permit database. The information included an abbreviated and filtered version of the 2025 vessel permit database, including permit number, vessel name, home port city, home port state, principal port city, principal port state, and species permit data. Counts of vessels by principal city were established. Corrections were made to the CSV file where principal port cities were misspelled or included erroneous spaces or other characters. A separate table was generated listing the principal port city, state, and number of vessels per city.

The USGS, National Geospatial Program, GNIS dataset was downloaded and used to define the location of each port city. Data were initially separated by state to reduce tabular join errors where place names existed across multiple states. The principal port count table and GNIS table were joined by matching the principal port city field in the GARFO database to the "FEATURE_NAME" field in GNIS using Esri software.

The joined data were reviewed, and data-mismatch errors were resolved. These mismatch errors included references to colloquial place names in the GARFO database, references to place names in the GARFO database that did not exist in GNIS, and different spellings between data sources. To rectify these issues, specific vessels were researched (i.e., internet search of public information) to verify their principal port location, and the GNIS terminology was used in the final product. Where more than one point accurately represented a principal port in the GNIS dataset, typically the point representing a populated place was used, as it was the most commonly matched feature class type. In some cases the GNIS data included multipoint features, these were divided into single points, and the location closest to the coast or port visible in imagery was used. Points were not relocated geospatially to remain consistent with GNIS placement. Data from each state were merged as a final step to create the final data product.

7. QUALITY PROCESS

Attribute accuracy: Original content was acquired from authoritative sources. Any attribute editing was conducted in order to accurately join information from the permits database to the GNIS feature names. Corrections were made to rectify spelling errors or align nomenclature/colloquial references to place names within the permits database. Counts represent a snapshot in time, in 2025.

Logistical consistency: This dataset integrates place names from two separate sources. The 'town' and 'feature_class' fields from the permits database and GNIS, respectively were used to join the two separate datasets. The GNIS data is compiled from Federal, State, and local sources and is validated according to the Board on Geographic Names' Principles, Policies, and Procedures.

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Completeness: Information on the number of permits per principal port is considered a complete snapshot representing federally permitted charter vessels/headboats in late 2025. Principal port locations from the GNIS relies on input from Federal, State, county, and local government agencies and other approved sources. The completeness, currency, and accuracy of the data varies by area depending on the quality and timeliness of that input.

Positional accuracy: Point locations used the GNIS dataset. Accuracy of these digital data is based upon the use of printed or electronic source graphics which are compiled to meet National Map Accuracy Standards. If maps are not used, data is validated against original source material.

Timeliness: This dataset was created from data obtained in 2025 from the GARFO permits database.

Use restrictions: Data is provided as is. NROC is not liable for any interpretations, assumptions, or conclusions based on these data. Users are responsible for understanding the metadata prior to use. Permit data from NOAA GARFO are the best available to the National Marine Fisheries Service when the data were compiled. To obtain official permit information, contact the NMFS Northeast Region Permit Office.

Distribution liability: All parties receiving these data must be informed of caveats and limitations.

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