New Bedford-style scallop dredge rigged with turtle chain.
RIGGING OF TURTLE CHAINS

In 2003, as part of a cooperative research program 12 fishing trips were conducted by the scallop industry in which one dredge was modified with turtle chains. In 2,500 observed tows, seven turtles were caught, but none on the side with turtle chains.

The scallop industry needs to take proactive measures to avoid sea turtle takes in order to minimize restrictions on the fishery. The preliminary success of the turtle chains strongly suggests that scallop vessels fishing between May and October south of Long Island rig turtle chains on their dredges.

The photograph on the reverse side pictures a turtle chain. As shown, it is simply a modified rock chain arrangement constructed of a lighter, but stronger, chain.

**Chains:** Use 3/8-inch Grade 70 or Trawlex chain, long or short link. This hardened steel chain reduces wear and stretching. It is significantly lighter but has the same breaking strength of a standard 5/8-inch sweep chain.

**Hanging:** Up and downs are hung from the back of the cutting bar. (See drawings.) Starting at the center and working toward each shoe, "U" bolts are welded 14 inches apart. We recommend for 14-foot to 15-foot dredges, using 11 up and downs, and on 11-foot to 13-foot dredges, using 9 up and downs.

Generally, 6 ticklers are hung running along the sweep, with the first starting at the rear of the shoes. Spaced on a normal sweep arrangement, this should give about a 12 to 13-inch square pattern.

Crossing points between the up and downs can be linked or shackled.

**CAUTION:** Do not hang the up and downs and ticklers tight onto the sweep; if they are too loose, however, the up and downs will get under the sweep.

We do not have a recommended action that the ticklers be placed outside or inside the up and downs. Some vessels had better luck maintaining scallop catches with the ticklers on the outside.

For additional information, call Ron Smolowitz with the Fisheries Survival Fund at (508) 564-5516, or Bill DuPaul at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science at (804) 684-7163.