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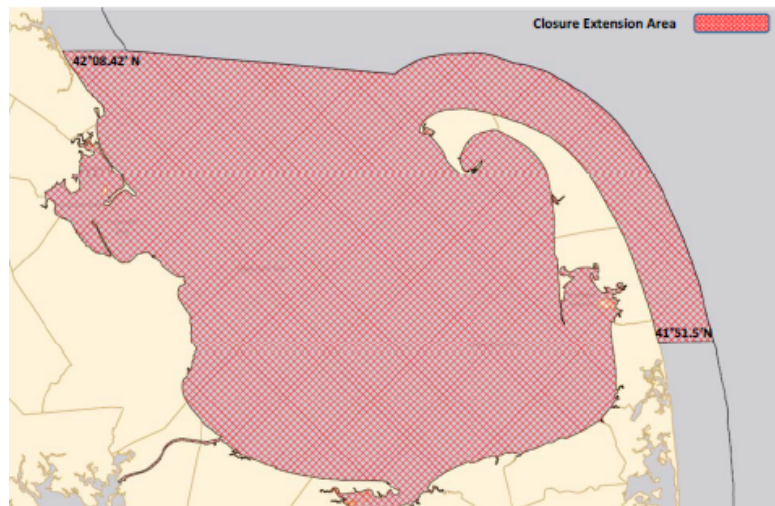
April 27, 2020

Marine Fisheries Advisory

Seasonal Fixed Gear Closure Extended Through May 7

The continued presence of endangered right whales in Cape Cod Bay has resulted in the Director of the Division of Marine Fisheries extending the seasonal fixed gear closure in a portion of the Massachusetts Bay Restricted Area through May 7th ([Notice of Declaration](#)). This extended closure only applies within those waters under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth within Cape Cod Bay south of 42° 08.42' north latitude and east of Cape Cod north of 41° 51.5' north latitude at Nauset Light (see map).

Fixed Gear Closure Extension Area – Area Closed Through May 7, 2020



This closure does not extend into any federal waters, including those waters north of Cape Cod on Stellwagen Bank. Accordingly, both recreational and commercial fishermen are prohibited from setting any trap gear or other fixed gear in these waters until May 8th, 2020. The duration of this closure extension may be shortened or extended based on continuing aerial and vessel-based surveys. Fishermen will be notified of any such adjustments.

On April 25, 2020, the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies conducted an aerial survey for right whales in Cape Cod and along the Outer Cape. The survey estimated there were five right whales feeding at or near the surface in southern Cape Cod Bay. Among the five whales were two mother calf/pairs. The presence of these mother/calf pairs elevates the need for conservative management. The population of right whales is suffering due to low birth rates and excessive mortality to adults. This year saw a slight increase in calves with 10 sighted off the Southeast U.S.

In past years mother/calf pairs have been seen in Cape Cod Bay during late April and early May, after the larger aggregations of adult whales have departed. These mother/calf pairs exhibit unique behaviors and are capable of wandering to unpredictable locations. Based on historical precedence and the amount of zooplankton available in the Bay, these mother/calf pairs are not expected to linger long. As soon as the weather allows, flights will be conducted to assess the situation, and DMF has the authority to amend the closure within a day of the results.

This closure extension protects these endangered whales from entanglements in fixed fishing gear, which are a major source of mortality for these animals. Right whales are critically endangered species and their population has been decreasing since 2010 due to continued mortality and low birth rates. The whales seasonally migrate into Massachusetts waters and aggregate in Cape Cod Bay to feed on zooplankton. In recent years, more than 60% of the known right whale population has been observed in our waters during late winter and early spring. For more information about the management of protected species in Massachusetts, contact DMF at 617- 626-1520 or visit our website at www.mass.gov/marinefisheries.

For more information, please visit our website:

www.mass.gov/marinefisheries