



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries

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Marine Fisheries Advisory

DMF Extends Small Vessel Speed Restriction for Cape Cod Bay to Protect Right Whales

As a result of the ongoing presence of right whales, the Division of Marine Fisheries is extending the small vessel speed restriction in Cape Cod Bay through May 15, 2023. Small vessels (less than 65') are required to travel at speeds no greater than 10 knots in this area. Right whales are highly susceptible to injury and death due to vessel collision. A complementary federal speed restriction in the same area applies to vessels 65' and greater until May 15.



Restricted Speed Limit Area 

Exempted Inshore Waters 

During aerial surveillance on April 26, the Center for Coastal Studies documented 20 right whales in Cape Cod Bay, including three mother/calf pairs, all of which were skim feeding at the surface or just below the surface. This intense feeding behavior makes them somewhat oblivious to their surroundings, often difficult to see and highly susceptible to vessel collision. Ten right

whale mother/calf pairs have also been documented in Cape Cod Bay in the 2023 season. All mariners are advised to follow the speed limit and use extreme caution when transiting the area. Additionally, it is unlawful, under state and federal law, to approach a right whale within 500 yards. If you observe a right whale entangled in fishing gear while on the water, report it immediately to the Center for Coastal Studies (800-900-3622), the state Office of Environmental Law Enforcement (800-632-8075) or the federal Entanglement Hot Line: (866- 755-6622).

For more information regarding the management of protected species in Massachusetts, please visit our website: www.mass.gov/marinefisheries