



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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April 29, 2024

Marine Fisheries Advisory

Reminder: Seasonal Trap and Gillnet Gear Closure to Protect Right Whales Will Remain in Effect

This advisory serves as notice that the Seasonal Trap and Gillnet Closures to Protect Right Whales remain in effect until May 15 due to the continued presence of right whales in Massachusetts' waters. DMF is closely monitoring the presence of North Atlantic right whales and may lift these closures (and the small vessel speed limit in Cape Cod Bay) prior to May 15 if observational data demonstrate right whales have migrated out of our coastal waters. The commercial trap gear closure applies only to those state waters north of Cape Cod to the New Hampshire border and east of Cape Cod east of 70°00' west longitude (see [map](#)), whereas the commercial gillnet closure and the recreational buoyed trap gear closure apply within all waters under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth. These closures are each designed to prevent endangered right whales from becoming entangled in fixed gear and associated buoy lines. Given the density of right whales in Massachusetts waters, DMF has also extended the seasonal speed restriction in Cape Cod Bay until May 15 (see [Notice](#)).

The Division of Marine Fisheries, in conjunction with the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies, continues aerial surveillance of right whales north and east of Cape Cod. Most recently, on April 26, 2024 aerial surveillance of Cape Cod Bay detected 52 right whales, including 3 mother/calf pairs (Figure 1). In addition, other right whale observations during the month of April have demonstrated aggregations of right whales throughout the spatial extent of Massachusetts coastal waters and surrounding areas (Figure 2). This heavy use of Massachusetts waters in the month of April is very common. Additional surveillance flights are anticipated to occur over the next several days to update our understanding of whale distribution. DMF will reevaluate the status of this closure based on the presence or absence of whales.

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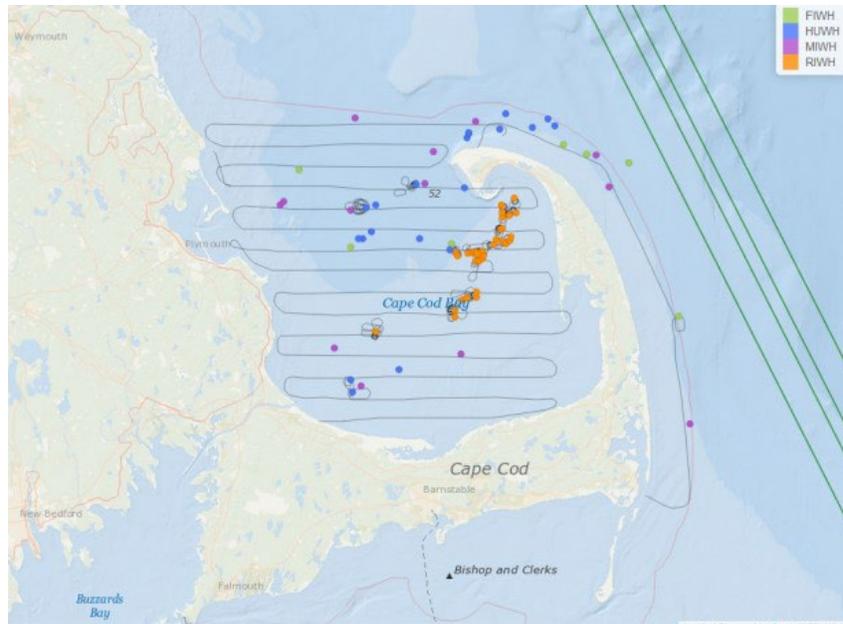


Figure 1. April 26, 2024 aerial survey of Cape Cod Bay (right whale sightings in orange).

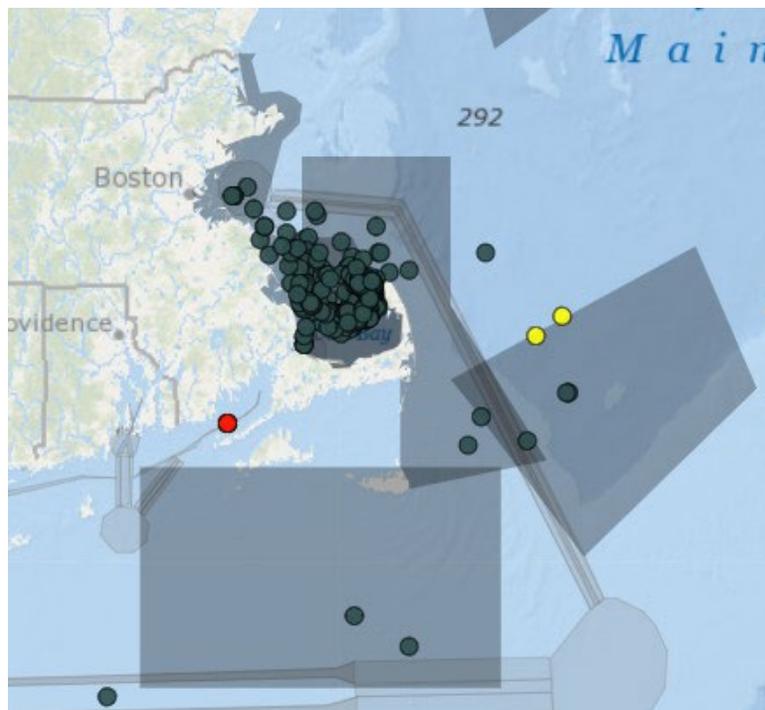


Figure 2. Sightings/detections of North Atlantic right whales April 1, 2024 through April 28, 2024. Black dots are definite visual sightings, while yellow and red represent possible and definite acoustic detections, respectively.

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