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April 30, 2020
MarineFisheries Advisory

SEASONAL SPEED LIMIT RESTRICTION RESCINDED EFFECTIVE MAY 1

The April 29, 2020 aerial survey conducted by the Provincetown Center of Coastal Studies demonstrates that the right whales have migrated out of Cape Cod Bay. As a result, the Director of the Division of Marine Fisheries has issued a declaration to rescind the extension of the seasonal fixed gear closure (Notice of Declaration).

Effective May 1, 2020 the 10 knot speed limit for vessels with an overall length of less than 65' ("small vessels") operating within those waters of Cape Cod Bay south of 42° 08' north latitude and north and east of Cape Cod west of 70°10'is lifted. The prior issued extension (see Advisory) would have maintained this 10-knot speed limit in these waters through May 7. Vessels with an overall length of 65' or greater are subject to a federal 10 knot speed limit rule in this area through May 15th (federal rule).

Right whales are a critically endangered species and their population has been decreasing since 2010 due to continued mortality and low birth rates. These 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 was observed in our waters during late winter and early spring. This speed limit is designed to protect against small vessel ship strikes with right whales from ship strikes, as ship strikes are a major sources of mortality for these endangered animals.

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.