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RIGHT WHALE AGGREGATION DEPARTS CAPE COD BAY - ADVISORY LIFTED

Recent survey and monitoring efforts by the Center for Coastal Studies and the Division of Marine Fisheries have determined that the large aggregation of right whales observed in western Cape Cod Bay has departed. The recent period of poor weather conditions prohibited observations of right whales in the Bay; however, the aerial and vessel-based surveillance teams were able to complete surveys on May 18. No right whales were sighted from the aircraft or boat, and habitat monitoring revealed a sharp decline in the zooplankton resource, suggesting that right whale aggregations are not likely to return in the near future.

With the departure of these animals the Commonwealth is lifting the May 9th advisory to mariners in Cape Cod Bay. *Marine Fisheries* would like to thank fishermen and other mariners for their assistance and compliance with measures designed to protect this highly endangered animal. During the past month, large aggregations of right whales have been seen feeding in high traffic areas such as Race Point and the Cape Cod Canal Shipping Lanes. *Marine Fisheries* monitors the presence of right whales in Cape Cod Bay through aerial surveys, habitat sampling, and acoustic monitoring. Sightings observed through these efforts allow *Marine Fisheries* to address threats to right whales on a real-time basis. We greatly appreciate the diligence and alertness of mariners and our surveillance team during the 2006 season.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) issues warnings to mariners and others through the Northern Right Whale Sighting Advisory System (SAS). Advisories regarding Cape Cod Bay and surrounding waters can be viewed at the NOAA Fisheries Northeast Region web site (<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/doc/whale.htm>) and are broadcast over NOAA weather radio (<http://205.156.54.206/nwr/>).

For more information, visit the *Marine Fisheries* website at <http://www.mass.gov/marinefisheries> or the Center for Coastal Studies at www.coastalstudies.org.

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