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Marine Fisheries Advisory

NOAA Fisheries to Hold Public Hearings on Proposed Vertical Line Rule

NOAA Fisheries is holding public hearings, including three in Massachusetts, to take public comment on proposed measures intended to reduce the risk of serious injury and mortality of large whales due to entanglements in vertical lines associated with commercial trap/pot and gillnet fisheries. The proposed rule identifies six alternatives to amend the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan. NOAA Fisheries' preferred alternative contains a suite of measures, with the following of direct importance to Massachusetts' fishing industry:

- Expansion of the Cape Cod Bay Restricted Area to include portions of the Outer Cape and the area abutting the Great South Channel, which would be closed to trap/pot fisheries during January 1 – April 30;
- Closure of an area of Jeffrey's Ledge to trap/pot fishing during October 1 – January 31;
- Closure of an area of Jordan Basin to trap/pot fishing during November 1 – January 31;
- Prohibition on fishing single traps/pots and a requirement to increase the number of traps per trawl based on area and distance to shore; and
- Modification of trap/pot and gillnet buoy line marking requirements to increase the size and frequency of marks.

The three hearings in Massachusetts will be held as follows:

Location	Date & Time	Address
Chatham, MA	August 13 th , 6-9 pm	Community Center 702 Main Street
Plymouth, MA	August 14th, 6-9 pm	Plymouth Public Library 132 South Street
Gloucester, MA	August 19th, 6-9 pm	NOAA Regional Office 55 Great Republic Dr

For more information, including the full schedule of public hearings, the Proposed Rule, the Environmental Impact Statement, and how to submit comment, visit:

<http://www.nero.noaa.gov/protected/whaletrp/vlr2013/index.html>. Written comments must be submitted on or before September 16, 2013.