



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Division of Marine Fisheries

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### Marine Fisheries Advisory

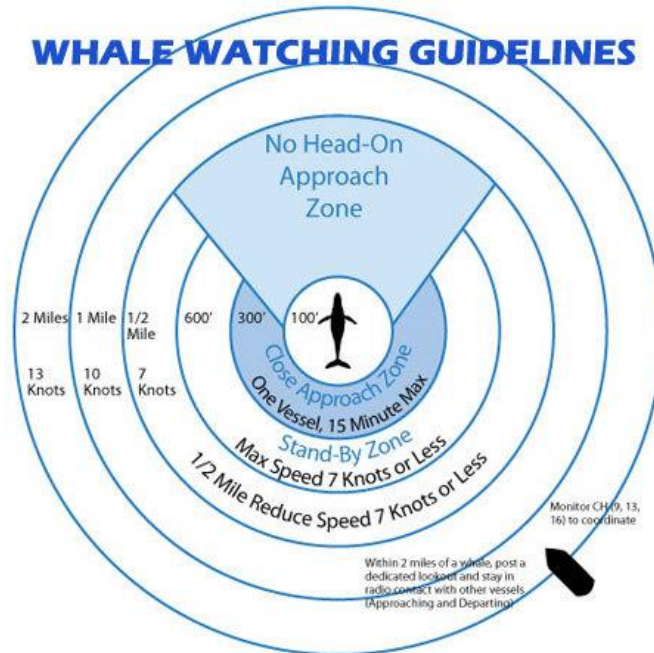
#### **Extreme Caution Urged Near Feeding Whales**

Massachusetts Environmental Police (MEP) and the Department of Fish and Games' (DFG) Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) are advising all mariners operating vessels or personal watercraft (kayaks and paddle boards) to use extreme caution off Plymouth, Massachusetts, where an aggregation of three juvenile humpbacks whales has been feeding for at least a week. These young whales are engaged in physically active feeding behavior that is very unpredictable, while feeding in a shallow area on menhaden (or "pogies"), a rich and highly abundant schooling forage fish that also attracts striped bass – and striped bass anglers. This creates a safety hazard for both whales and humans. Collision with a vessel or personal watercraft can cause damage to the vessel and cause physical injury to the whale and has the potential to cause serious injury or death to humans involved. The shallow water and presence of encroaching vessels, along with the young age of the animals, may increase the unpredictability of their behavior.

Mariners are reminded it is illegal to harass marine mammals under the federal Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act. Harassment includes any act of pursuit, torment or annoyance that can injure or disrupt the feeding behavior of the animal. The National Marine Fisheries Service recommends that mariners stay at least 100 feet from whales and take a precautionary approach, given the unpredictable behavior of whales and the potential safety hazards involved. Federal guidelines on viewing marine life can be found here:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/new-england-mid-atlantic/marine-life-viewing-guidelines/whale-watching-and-wildlife-viewing-new>

## WHALE WATCHING GUIDELINES



Mariners are encouraged to avoid encroaching on the feeding whales and their food source. The area off Plymouth is being patrolled by the Plymouth Harbormaster, the Massachusetts Environmental Police, and the National Marine Fisheries Service's Office of Law Enforcement to monitor the area, conduct outreach and ensure that laws are enforced.