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Commonwealth of Massachusetts

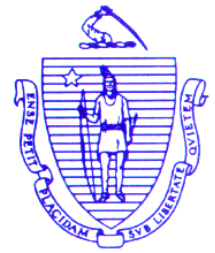
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August 1, 2019

Marine Fisheries Advisory

NMFS Schedules Massachusetts Public Meetings Concerning Entanglements and Right Whale Conservation

Tuesday, August 20, 2019 - 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Region
55 Great Republic Drive Gloucester, MA 01930

Wednesday, August 21, 2019 - 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Upper Cape Cod Regional Technical School
220 Sandwich Rd. Bourne, MA 02352

On August 20th and 21st, there will be two federal meetings in Massachusetts hosted by the National Marine Fisheries Service to receive comments on possible alternatives to reduce risk of entanglement and serious injury & mortality attributable to the American lobster fishery for northern right whales. NMFS is holding a total of eight scoping meetings from Maine to Rhode Island in anticipation of preparing a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for modifications to the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan. The purpose of these meetings is to collect information from interested parties to help NMFS determine the scope and significant issues that should be addressed in-depth in the analyses included in the DEIS.

The Large Whale Take Reduction Team produced in April 2019 a set of near-consensus framework recommendations. Reductions in vertical buoy lines and gear modifications are the preferred strategies that the Team identified to minimize harm to right whales. DMF has been in regular communication with NMFS staff providing updated data analyses and advice. DMF has strongly urged NMFS make every effort to strive for a single set of regulations within each LCMA across the states and federal jurisdictions. DMF staff will be participating in these meetings along with NMFS to provide the agency's input and data analyses compiled from its extensive data collection program.

At the scoping meetings, NMFS will provide a brief presentation laying out the regulatory context, providing information on the status of right whales, and discussing the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan and the Team's recent deliberations and recommendations. Public comment will be taken after the presentations. Written comments may also be submitted at the meetings. NMFS is hoping these meetings result in an open exchange of information between industry, conservation advocates, and regulators.

Fishermen are welcome to attend any or all meetings.

Written comments are also welcomed.

- *Electronic Submission:* Submit all electronic public comments by sending an email to gar.ALWTRT2019@noaa.gov using the subject line “Comments on Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan Scoping.”
- *Mail:* Submit written comments to Michael Pentony, Regional Administrator, National Marine Fisheries Service, 55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930-2276. Mark the outside of the envelope: “Comments on Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan Scoping.”

Other Scoping meetings are scheduled:

Rhode Island

1. Thursday, August 8, 2019 – Narragansett, RI, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

URI Graduate School of Oceanography
Corless Auditorium
215 South Ferry Road
Narragansett, RI 02882

Maine

2. Monday, August 12, 2019 - Machias, ME, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

University of Maine at Machias
Performing Arts Center
116 O'Brien Avenue
Machias, ME 04654

3. Tuesday, August 13, 2019 - Ellsworth, ME, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Ellsworth High School Performing Arts Center
24 Lejok Street
Ellsworth, ME 04605

4. Wednesday, August 14, 2019 - Waldoboro, ME, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Medomak Valley High School
320 Manktown Road
Waldoboro, Maine 04572

5. Thursday, August 15, 2019 - Portland, ME, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

South Portland High School
637 Highland Ave.
South Portland ME, 04106

New Hampshire

6. Monday, August 19, 2019 – Portsmouth, NH, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Urban Forestry Center
45 Elwyn Road
Portsmouth, NH 03801