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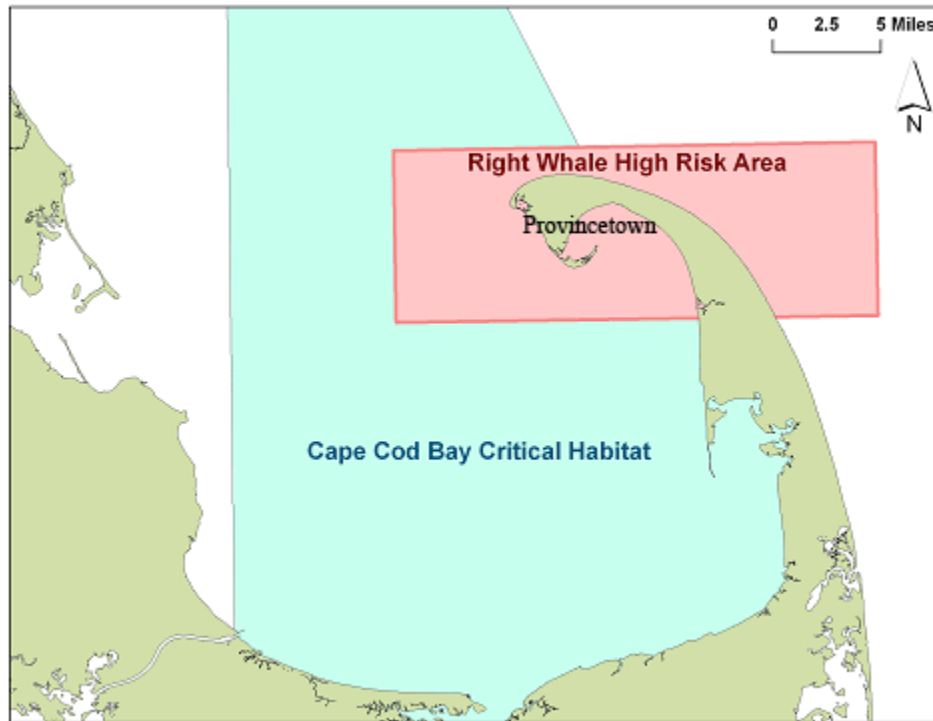


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April 11, 2008
Marine Fisheries Advisory

**AGGREGATION OF RIGHT WHALES AROUND TIP OF CAPE COD –
Advisory to Mariners**

An aggregation of right whales around Provincetown has prompted the Division of Marine Fisheries (*Marine Fisheries*) to issue an advisory to all vessel operators. Unusually high concentrations of whale are present throughout the nearshore areas spanning Provincetown Harbor to Race Point and beyond to Highland Light. **Operators are advised to reduce speed (10 knots), post lookouts, and proceed with caution to avoid colliding with this highly endangered whale.**



Vessels are prohibited by state and federal law from approaching within 500 yards of a right whale. Massachusetts Environmental Police and U.S. Coast Guard are authorized to enforce the 500- yard rule. Fishermen are reminded that the approach rule also prohibits them from starting fishing operations (setting or hauling gear) within 500 yards of a right whale.

The Massachusetts Right Whale Conservation Program has detected an unprecedented aggregation of right whales (50-70) around the tip of Cape Cod. These whales are feeding just below the surface and are vulnerable to vessel strikes. Extremely high concentrations of zooplankton along the northeastern margins of the Bay suggest that the aggregation and near-surface feeding activity will likely continue and that the risk of vessel strike will remain elevated in these areas. The zooplankton resource will be analyzed again in the next few days, at which time we will re-evaluate the level of risk. When right whales depart the area, the advisory will be lifted.

Whales that are surface- and subsurface-feeding on dense blooms of zooplankton (copepods) are at great risk for vessel strike. More vessel traffic is expected in this area over the next few weeks with seasonal increases in recreational and commercial fishing, as well as whale watching, and passenger ship activity. Right whales are the most endangered large whale in the North Atlantic , with a population of approximately 400 animals. Vessel strike is a major cause of human-induced mortality for right whales.

The Massachusetts Right Whale Conservation Program is a cooperative effort between *Marine Fisheries* and the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies (CCS) to study and protect right whales in Cape Cod Bay , funded primarily through National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries). Management of maritime activities near right whales is part of the program,

relying on real-time monitoring of right whales through vessel and aerial based surveillance, and forecasting of right whale presence through habitat analysis. Whale presence is also being monitored by acoustic listening stations in a cooperative effort with Cornell University researchers. The Program is the most comprehensive of any throughout the species' range.

The NOAA Fisheries issues warnings to mariners via the Northern Right Whale Sighting Advisory System (SAS). Participating agencies in the SAS include *Marine Fisheries* and the Massachusetts Environmental Police, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), CCS, and other research groups. Advisories can be viewed at the NOAA Fisheries Northeast Region web site (www.nero.noaa.gov/ro/doc/whale.htm) and are broadcast over NOAA weather radio ([http:// 205.156.54.206/nwr/](http://205.156.54.206/nwr/)).

For more information, visit the *Marine Fisheries* website at www.mass.gov/marinefisheries or contact Erin Burke (Erin.Burke@state.ma.us , 978 551-0152) or Dan McKiernan (dan.mckiernan@state.ma.us, 617 626-1536). Center for Coastal Studies (www.coastalstudies.org) right whale researchers Dr. Charles (Stormy) Mayo and Dr. Nathalie Jaquet can be reached at (508) 487-3623.