



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Division of Marine Fisheries

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MarineFisheries Advisory

Right Whales Present in Large Numbers in Massachusetts Waters

DMF is urging all mariners to use extreme caution in Massachusetts coastal waters due to the presence of large numbers of endangered North Atlantic right whales. From March 28, 2025 through April 10, 2025 aerial and acoustic surveillance conducted by the Center for Coastal Studies, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, and the National Marine Fisheries Service detected high densities of right whales in Cape Cod Bay, as well as sightings in Massachusetts Bay (Figure 1). April is typically the peak of the right whale season, coinciding with the densest aggregations of whales feeding at the surface or just below the surface. The whales are often difficult to see and susceptible to vessel collision. For the safety of both mariners and whales, vessel operators should maintain speeds of 10 knots or less, stay at least 500 yards away from right whales, and proceed with caution to avoid collisions.

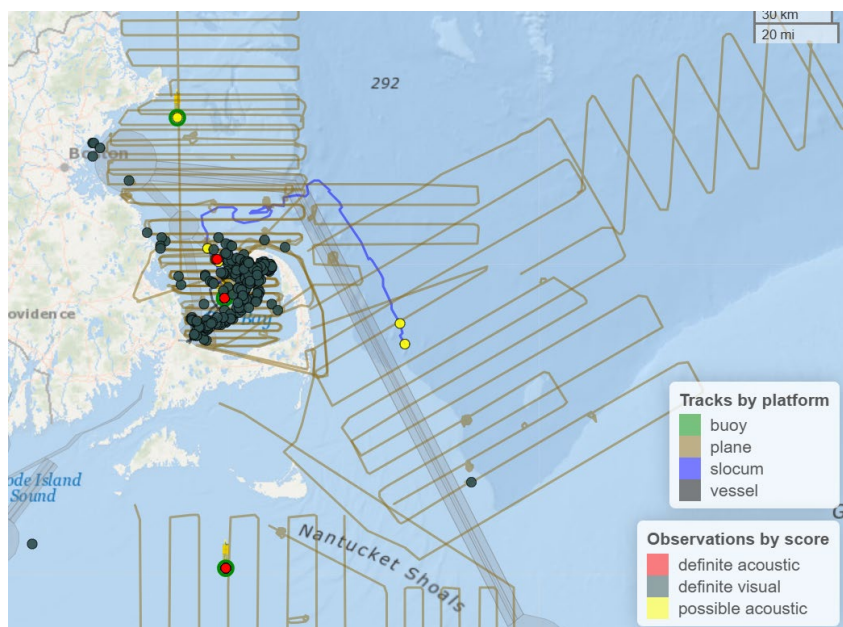


Figure 1. Aerial and acoustic detections of North Atlantic right whales from March 28, 2025 through April 10, 2025. (Tan lines are aerial surveillance tracks).

To protect right whales from vessel strike, DMF established a seasonal speed restriction from March 1 – May 15 for vessels less than 65' in length within those waters of Cape Cod Bay south of 42° 08' north latitude, as well as those waters north of Cape Cod that are west of 70° 10' west longitude (see map [HERE](#)). A complementary [federal speed limit](#) applies to all vessels 65' overall length and greater. DMF may extend or rescind this seasonal small vessel speed limit based on the continued presence or absence

of whales. DMF also reminds boaters of the state and federal law that prohibits approaching a right whale within 500 yards.

The seasonal trap/pot and gillnet closures to protect right whales from entanglement are currently in effect until May 15. DMF is closely monitoring the presence of right whales in our coastal waters and may lift these closures (and the small vessel speed limit in Cape Cod Bay) prior to May 15 if observational data demonstrate right whales have migrated out of Massachusetts waters. The commercial trap gear closure applies to all state waters north of Cape Cod to the New Hampshire border and east of Cape Cod east of 70°00' west longitude (see [map](#)) whereas the commercial gillnet closure and the recreational buoyed trap gear closure applies to all state waters. These closures are designed to prevent endangered right whales from becoming entangled in fixed gear and associated buoy lines.

The Division of Marine Fisheries, in conjunction with the Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, will continue to monitor the presence of right whales through aerial and acoustic surveillance.

For more information regarding the management of protected species in Massachusetts, please visit our website: www.mass.gov/marinefisheries